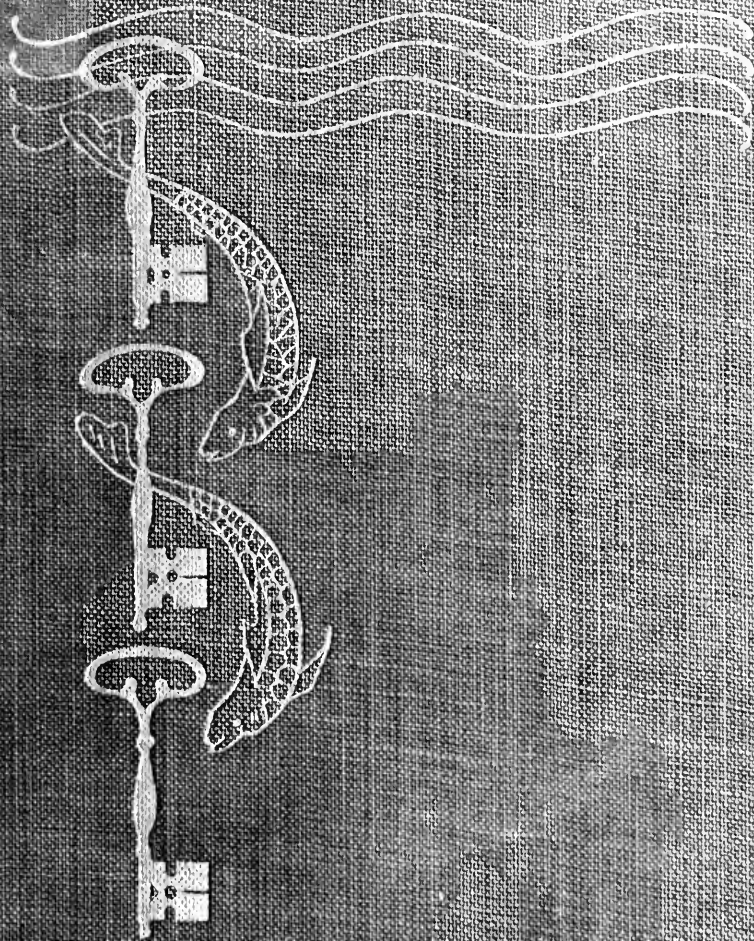


IMAGINA

BY JULIA ELLSWORTH FORD



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THE MIST. A play in one act. Produced in London at the Little Theatre, November, 1913.



IMAGINA

“They learn to live who learn to contemplate,
For contemplation is the unconfined
God who creates us. To the growing mind
Freedom to think is fate,
And all that age and after-knowledge augurate
Lies in a little dream of youth enshrined:”



IMAGINA

BY
JULIA ELLSWORTH FORD

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ARTHUR RACKHAM
AND
LAUREN FORD*



NEW YORK
(DUFFIELD & COMPANY,)
1914


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TO
LAUREN, ELLSWORTH, HOBART
AND THE BOY
REX.



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author thanks Witter Bynner for contributing the original poem in Chapter VII. Also Percy MacKaye for the use of the prefatory poem and Arvia MacKaye for the poem written when she was ten years old.

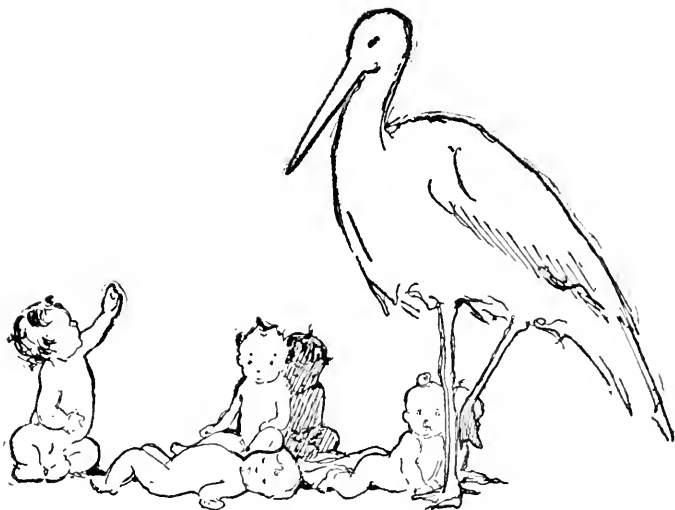
ACKNOWLEDGMENT
BY
THE
AUTHOR

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CHAPTER I

SECRETS

I WAS only a wee lad when my heart was set adrift on the world.

My father was a silent man, strong, tall, dark and stern. He came to see me twice a year and shook me by my hand; he never kissed me. I suppose that was because I was a boy. He patted my head instead, and said I was growing tall and fine, but I knew all the same that I was a wee chap.

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Dame is what I called the woman who took care of me; perhaps that was her first name, perhaps her last. I never called her Mrs. Dame, and I never heard my father call her anything. She always seemed to have a great deal to talk to him about, and whispered secrets to him. He would listen and look down at her and then 'way down at me, pat my head and say, "Run and play now."

Once I did not run and play. Oh, I know it is very wicked to listen. Dame said only bad boys did that; that listening boys and crowing hens always came to very bad ends. I spent three days watching the hens and I came to the conclusion that all ours must be very good, because I never heard one of them crow.

When my father said "Run and play," I ran away. But I did not go far this time, because I wanted to know the secrets; so I sat 'down near the great high hedge in the garden where I could

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hear. Dame seemed quite excited, whispered something, then spoke in an ordinary voice and said, "I think he will live now."

Well, I was glad to hear that, for I wanted to live.

"Of course he is delicate and frail," she went on. "Physically he is improving, but mentally—"

Here she shook her head sadly as if something serious was the matter with me. Again she lowered her voice and I couldn't hear.

It was very provoking: "mentally"—what was that? I would ask Old Timothy. No, that wouldn't do; he might tell, and then Dame would know I had listened.

She then raised her voice and continued: "He has no books, only a simple primer that I gave him. Your library is locked. We obey all your orders, and never let him go into the tower. Sundays, we read a chapter in the Bible, but he doesn't seem to listen. He is a very strange boy."

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Then Dame whispered again, and the next I heard was, "Yes, I am afraid it is true."

What was true? I wondered. It was that "mentally" again, I suppose.

Then she continued, "He sits and looks far away, and seems to see things, and he doesn't hear when I speak to him, and in the twilight and moonlight I have seen him on his balcony, stretching out his arms and calling, 'Imagina, Imagina'; and once I found him lying in the grass calling the same name and speaking poetry to the air. It is a puzzle to me where he learns poetry. Of course there are a few pieces in his primer. I will continue to keep him out of doors all day. He takes his lunch in the morning and lives in the woods or on the rocks by the sea, and does not return until night for his supper. It is quite safe now for you to go away, I think."

But here she whispered.

My heart beat fast. Was she telling things on

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me? Was she whispering about how I watched the frog in the pond kicking his hind legs and swimming? How I practised on my stomach on the grass and then jumped into the pool? Oh, I kicked all right, even if I did swallow so much water that there wasn't any room for my supper, but I didn't seem to get back to the shore and Old Timothy pulled me out, and I was whipped because I wouldn't promise not to do it again.

Suddenly I was seized with fear. Was she going to tell my father to whip me and make me promise? I could not stand that, because you always hate big strong people when they hold you tight and whip you, and I did not want to hate my father. I was always glad to see my father, but I stood in awe of him and was afraid; he seemed like the giant Thor in the primer, and although I didn't see his hammer, I believed he had one somewhere about him—perhaps in his big black sleeve.

Then Dame called, "Rex, your father is going;

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come and say good-bye. He is going for a long time."

I approached shyly.

My father patted me on the head, shook hands with Dame, mounted his horse and rode away. I watched him ride farther and farther away, now a black speck at the top of the hill, then he seemed to disappear suddenly into the clouds like Thor; and when there was no speck on the long lane, a large lump seemed to get into my throat.

I ran to the house, up the winding stairs, past the tall clock with a funny moon-face, into my room, and sat on my bed and looked up at the wall toward the picture of the beautiful lady, tenderly smiling at the child in her arms. Somehow, whenever I felt that lump in my throat, it comforted me to look at that lady. Could she be my mother? I would ask Dame, but it took courage to ask Dame, so I tied my necktie four times; not that it needed tying, it was oftener untied, but

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it gave me time. Then I said, "Good-bye, beautiful lady. I hope some day you will come here to live, and will smile at me like that."

"Dame," said I quickly, opening the kitchen door, "is the picture in my room, of the lady with the smile of love, my mother?"

She threw up both hands.

"La, la!" said she, "she is our Lady Virgin."

"Did I ever have a mother?" I asked timidly.

Then she smoothed her black silk apron—when-
ever she did that, her face grew stern—and she
said, "Isn't it enough to have a fine father? A
stork brought you from over the sea to this great
lonely place, and your father brought me here to
take charge of you, and I was"—here she broke off
abruptly. "Enough of your queer questions, run
and play."

That night, just before I went to sleep, I put a
paper over the baby in the picture and said:

"Dear Lady Virgin, please smile your sweet

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smile at me, for I haven't any mother, only a father and a stork that has gone away, and my father doesn't smile and take me in his arms." And somehow, after I covered up the baby, she smiled at me, and I said, "I will make believe, and I will be your little boy and you will be my mother."

Then my tears dried up and I felt happier than I had felt for a long time, and I lay me down and went to sleep.

In the morning I woke with the sun shining on me and the birds twittering. They always called me in the morning, I think because I gave them crumbs, and they knew I loved them.

Then I remembered the dear Lady Virgin. Would she be angry with me for covering up the baby so she could not smile on it? For a moment I dared not look. Trembling I reached up my hand to pull the paper away, and looked. She was still smiling.

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“Dear Lady Mother,” I said, “I will take the paper away in the day time so you can smile on your other little boy, but I love you, and I want you to smile for me at night. I must hurry and dress, or Dame will scold.”

So I vigorously pulled one stocking on, while a little bird perched on the railing of the balcony and sang his little song. I rolled on my stomach and watched him hop down and eat the crumbs I kept on the balcony for the birds.

“Why can’t I play hop-bird?”

I put my hands behind me and hopped like the bird, then I tried to hop upon the bed, but it was what might be called one of my failures. I fell back, and it hurt. Then I lay on the floor and dreamed, and forgot breakfast, and thought of my secrets and talked about them to the Lady Virgin.

“Dear Lady Virgin, I must tell you about my secrets, my Imagina and my poems. I longed for

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some one to love me, and as I did not have any one, I made a beautiful lady in the air. I stand on my balcony in the moonlight and call, 'Imagina, Imagina, come and love me.' Then out of the mist a beautiful lady comes. She has golden hair like the sun's rays, and she seems to hold out her hands to me. Sometimes she grows very small and is a very little girl. Dear Lady Virgin, I love you both, but I wish a real mother had brought me and not a stork."

Suddenly the door opened and Dame entered smoothing her apron, a bad sign for me:

"Dreaming again, dreaming! Put that other stocking on and come with me quickly. You are always late. I shall have to punish you, if you can't learn to come to your breakfast on time. What were you saying to yourself?"

When Dame asked that, I knew I must answer something or get punished, and although my answer never gave her any satisfaction, I repeated,

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“I have a secret to myself
That no one else can see,
I hum it over to myself,
And no one hears but me
I'll tell you what it is—maybe!”

“Maybe, indeed! Maybe you will put on that stocking and follow me.”

I followed, with various pictures of past punishments in mind, but no punishment came and I ate silently.

Monday morning came.

“Joy for Monday morning! Hurrah! Hurrah!” I shouted, marching round the table with my hand up for a flag.

“Stop making such a noise,” called Dame. “Here is your lunch. It is a fine day, so don't come back until six o'clock.”

Away I flew, shouting “Hurrah!” but not until I was out of hearing.

Monday morning, Kit, my dog friend, and I al-

IMAGINA

ways went to the wood pile. There I found my treasure, my other secret.

Old Timothy went away for one Sunday every month and brought a paper back. He drove off in the morning and returned just in time for our evening meal. Later, he settled himself in front of the log-fire with his pipe and the paper.

I played on the floor with Kit or watched the logs burn. On the last page of that paper was my secret, a poem 'way at the end. When he finished the contents, after occasionally reading to Dame a line or two, while she knitted, he threw it into the basket. The following Monday morning it was thrown into the barrel in the wood-shed, where I secretly pulled it out and tore off the poem. With this treasure, I fled to the woods or the sea. Each poem I learned by heart. Some were easy to understand, some difficult—like God.

"Come," said Old Timothy, appearing at the

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door of the kitchen as I was eating my breakfast one morning.

Timothy never said more than was necessary, so "Come" was exciting enough for me. I was about to go without finishing my breakfast, when Dame convinced me, by a look, of the importance of my finishing it; but that was done in a hurry. Then I followed Timothy. He pointed to a pen in the cowshed.

"New little ones," said he, "pink one for you."

I lifted Kit up. "Isn't he beautiful, Kit? What shall we name him?"

The pig made a queer little noise like new shoes.

It took all day to think of a name, but at evening I returned and found Old Timothy in the cowshed.

"Timothy," said I, quoting a line from one of my poems, "'a thing of beauty is a joy forever,' and as my little pink pig is very beautiful I have

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decided on a name. What do people do when they name things?"

"Oh, just pour a little water on them and say their name," he answered carelessly.

"I have decided," said I, proudly, "to name my little pink pig *Roseleaf*."

First Old Timothy's stomach heaved and then his chest, and he chuckled to himself. It was a disagreeable sound. I felt hurt and indignant, so I walked away.

Kit and I went to the well, where I got a pitcherful of water, and lifting Kit with one hand, so he could see, with the other I poured the water over the beautiful pink pig, and said:

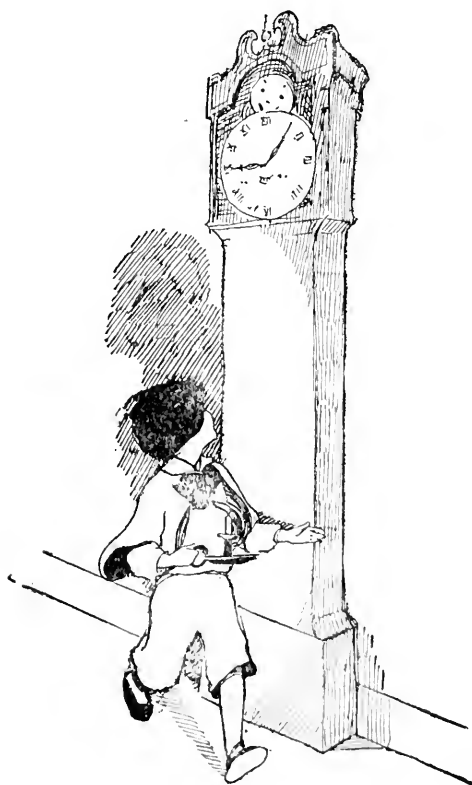
"Henceforth your name is *Roseleaf*."

Roseleaf acted as badly about his beautiful name as Old Timothy had, and made a dreadful noise and ran away, so Kit and I wandered off to the sea, a little depressed.

There were days in that solitude when the sea

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seemed very lonely: long stretches of sand, long stretches of sea. I read my poems and dreamed. If the great Magi had appeared and said, "Wish," I probably would have wished for the picture lady to step out of the frame and live, and be a mother to me, or that Imagina would be real and come and



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play with me. In the bright sunlight I never called up the picture of Imagina. It was only on the balcony in the dim moonlight or out of the mist that she came to me. I thought of her so often that she seemed to be real and was a comfort to me. I could see her with my eyes shut and she was lovelier than the lady in my primer.

I admired my father, but I loved Kit, my dog, better than my father. I named my dog Kit after my beloved warm kitten that died.

I confided all my secrets to Kit, except that I never told him I loved him better than I did my father.

That is one of the secrets you keep to yourself.





CHAPTER II

MY DEAR FRIENDS

I LOVED to lie under my dear tree.

It was a wonderful tree; it had such weird arms, such queer shaped arms, and they stretched out and waved at me. When I was very little, I used to be a wee bit frightened in the moonlight, for when the moon rose, it seemed as if the strange arms would reach out to grab me and twist me into the tree. And below, among its gnarled roots, little elvish shapes seemed to peer and point at me, as they played in the moonbeams or rode astride

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of the dead branches torn by a century of winds and storms.

But at other times I used to feel that my dear tree was lonely, just like me, and so his arms got all twisted beckoning for some one to come and keep him company. We were all friends, and had a lot to say to each other, when Mistress Robin Red Love and Master Rob were building a cosy little house in the folds of my tree's arms; and Kit and I spent many hours under his spreading protection.

The only draw-back was, it was so near the house that Dame could see me. She called me lazy when I dreamed and talked to Kit and the Robins, the tree and the little spring buds and flowers. She thought it queer to do these things, but I thought it queer not to do them.

They were all my dear friends, you know, my only friends, because you call people your friends who love you. Fortunately Dame could not hear

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what I said when I talked to my dear friends, my tree, Mistress Red Love and Master Rob, and the little spring flowers and my beloved Kit.

In my primer I used to see little boys and girls playing together, but I had never seen a real child, so my play-mates were Kit and the birds and the flowers. "Earth's little children," that is what I called the flowers and the plants. And I loved to help old Mother Earth—that is what the poets call her—take care of her little babies.

And then I would think to myself: the children of the skies are the stars. I think the sun must be their father, for all the bright sparks that he sends to dance on the water are like stars, and I suppose the sparks he sends out to the sky grow big and become stars. And the children of the air are all the birds and moths and butterflies and flying things.

When the tenderness of Spring was in the air, I loved to watch the wind and the birds, and I

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loved to watch all growing things come into the sunshine, for it made me feel less lonely.

“Just to watch the happy life of the green things growing!
Oh, the fluttering and the pattering of those green things
growing!

How they talk each to each, when none of us are knowing;
In the wonderful white of the weird moonlight
Or the dim dreamy dawn when the cocks are crowing.
I love, I love them so,—my green things growing!
And I think that they love me, without false showing;
For by many a tender touch, they comfort me so much.”

“Just look, Kit,” I said, with my arms around the dog’s neck, peering down at a little bud, “it wasn’t there yesterday. It came up in the night. Wouldn’t it be fun to slip out of the house in the moonlight, and watch it grow? Do you think we could keep awake? Perhaps it grows in the night so no one can see, because it wants to give us a surprise in the morning.

“Kit, I am disappointed in Roseleaf. She is

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ungrateful and she doesn't return our love. All she wants is to have me scratch her back with a nail on the end of a stick."

Kit listened with sympathetic eyes. He was a good listener. And then he kissed my hand by way of showing that, however unfaithful Roseleaf was, he would always be faithful. Then he wandered off, leaving me to dream.

My little robin hopped near me and I threw her crumbs. After she was satisfied, she still kept singing little songs to me.

"Now, Mistress Red Love, I know a place where thou mayest not soar—higher than 'the blue deep thou wingest'; beyond all aerial flights into the blue of which thou singest; beyond the purple hills into a sacred world that's all my own; a world that thou hast never known, dear bird, although thou canst 'fly and fly and fly into the sky.'

"Oh, I know what you want, Mistress Red Love. You couldn't be hungry. I have just fed you.

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Oh, I know your secrets; I found them out long ago. You want feathers."

Whereupon I put my hand in my pocket and held out a handful of feathers to the bird.

"If I keep on throwing you little birds feathers out of my pillow, what will Dame say when she finds out my pillow is getting very thin? I will have to put some straw in it very soon to fill it out, if you keep calling for more. How is Master Robin? He hasn't been to call on me this morning."

Robin Red Love put her head on one side and then on the other and hopped a little nearer with a leisurely air, as if there was no need of hurry in the world, and her little eyes shone brightly with expectation, only she seemed to say, "I mean to take it, of course, but we women like to be coaxed."

"You look very pretty this morning, with your shining red breast. Better hurry and come take

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your feathers for your feather-bed before Dame comes.”

Mistress Love hopped nearer and nearer and picked a feather daintily from my hand.

“Better take two. You can take two if you try. Do you know, when I see you like this in the early spring morning, I feel like it says in one of my poems. Mistress Red Love, shall I say it to you?

‘O Blessed Bird, the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place,
That is fit home for thee.’ ”

The little bird flirted her little head, danced about, and said, “Spring is a faery time.”

“But, Mistress Love, do you realise what a hard time Master Rob had to win you? Have you forgotten how he sang and coaxed you, and invited you to come and make a home with him in the sheltering arms of my dear tree?”

Mistress Love looked at me with her bright eyes.

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She must have understood, for she gave a twirp to Master Rob as much as to say, "Well, here he is; I am his now."

Then she hopped confidently near me and picked up two feathers.

Master Rob must have understood her call, for he flew down and boldly came forward and, in trying to get as many feathers as he could, he scattered them about, then suddenly stopped and listened, put his head on one side, then on the other, and said, "Some one is coming. It must be Dame. She doesn't love me. Birds always know when love is near."

And he flew away without taking a feather.

"Well, well, Master Rob, what is the meaning of this? I don't see any one."

But the next moment I knew; for I saw Dame coming—her thick, square shoes tramping heavily, her black silk apron and the lace in her cap blowing in the wind.

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Hurriedly, I picked up the few feathers scattered by the frightened Master Rob, whose boldness was only assumed.

“Rex,” said she, severely, smoothing down her apron and her stray locks under her cap, “are you going to lie under this tree all the morning and talk? Who do you talk to?”

Who was there to talk to, unless I talked to the tree, the birds and the flowers?

“Sometimes I talk to Kit,” I said.

I didn’t care to speak to her about the tree and the birds.

“Kit isn’t here,” she said severely, as if she had caught me lying. “Speak up, what were you saying, and who have you been talking to this long time? It is wicked to lie. Mind that you tell the truth.”

Her eyes fastened on mine. There was no hope of escape, although I knew whatever I answered would not satisfy her. I didn’t want to tell her

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about the wind, the birds and the dear tree, but I knew I had to, so I said, sadly, "I talk to the birds and the tree."

I didn't want to say anything more about Mistress Love and Master Rob and how I loved them, nor did I think it necessary to tell her I had pulled the feathers out of my pillows for them.

"Whoever heard of talking to a tree! You must have had a pleasant conversation."

I felt hurt about the tree, so I said:

"The birds understand me. Poets say they understand the birds and the rustling trees and the whispering wind. 'The green things growing talk each to each.'"

"Where on earth do you get such ideas? It puzzles me. Fool poets indeed!" she said contemptuously. "You talk like those fool folk."

"What is a fool folk? Is a poet a fool folk?" I asked simply.

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“He is,” said she emphatically. “A poet and a fool are one and the same thing.”

“Think you,” said I impulsively—so intent was I on being a poet that I forgot that her answer would probably hurt my feelings,—“Think you that I might be a fool poet some day, if I learned to understand the song of birds, the whispering leaves and murmuring wind, for ‘the waves of the sea have spoken to me; the wild birds have taught me; the music of many waters has been my master.’ ”

The next moment I regretted my impulsive question, but my eagerness to learn was great.

“Now God forbid—” she exclaimed, “that you should be a fool poet. I am a practical woman and your father is a practical man and we have no use for fool poets. Mind that you quit this talk of whispering leaves and whispering wind. Whoever heard of any one in his right mind talking to a tree?”

Again she smoothed her black silk apron.

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“Now God forbid! Whispering leaves, indeed!”

From that day I grew more silent. And if I were to be a fool, surely it was those fool poets who comforted me.

No one else wrote about things I loved. What would I do without those poems? It was well Dame didn't know about them.

Master Rob didn't get his feathers that day. Kit returned and I was sent off to play by the sea.

Kit licked my hand as we trudged quietly on, understanding I was unhappy.

Strange how dogs understand better about things than human beings, especially when you feel unhappy.



CHAPTER III

A FAERY



THERE had been a hard thunderstorm. I stood by the kitchen window looking out. The sun had just burst from the dark clouds as much as to say, "You can hide me for awhile, but when spring comes I am so impatient, and in such a hurry, and so filled with warm life, that I spread myself over everything, thaw all the frozen things, dry the nests of the little birds, make the earth smell fresh and sweet of spring."

Dame was baking bread. She had on a black dress, over which she wore a black silk apron with pockets, and when she worked she put a large blue gingham apron over it to keep it clean. Around

IMAGINA

her waist she tied a black silk cord from which her keys hung. She was tall, thin, strong and always busy. She never dreamed; but sometimes, I think, Old Timothy dreamed. When Dame had finished what she had to do, she made things to do. "Work, constant work," she used to say to me, "is your first duty, and soon it gets to be a habit. I am here to see that you are a good boy, that you keep well and grow strong." She never gave me a good-night kiss or tucked me in my warm little bed. She sent me alone with my candle to my little dark room at night. She thought that made me brave and manly, I suppose.

Old Timothy stayed with us in the kitchen while the rain fell, and made a wooden fastening for the barn-door with his new penknife. We were all rather quiet during the storm. From time to time Dame glanced out of the window. And when the rain was over and the wind was still she began to talk.

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"I am glad this storm has stopped. It was about as bad a storm as I have seen for a long time. If a storm like that kept up for forty days, we would have to turn that favourite out-house of yours, Timothy, into an ark," said Dame.

I saw visions of Dame and lively little Roseleaf at close quarters in the ark.

"I suppose," I ventured, "Noah must have had a big ark with all those animals. I should think you must have been very crowded with all the animals and food. Weren't you?"

"What's that?" Dame said sternly, with a questioning look. But Old Timothy was smiling, so I ventured again.

"Weren't you terribly crowded in the ark?"

Immediately I saw something was wrong. Old Timothy dashed out of the door, suddenly. Dame stood with her mouth open ready to speak, but no sound came. Before she could utter a word, I fled

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after Timothy, ran around to the front door, up the steps to my room for my cap and put it on; but when I caught sight of the dear Virgin and baby, I removed my cap, bowed and said:

“Lady Virgin, Bible stories are hard to understand, and if I ask Dame she always seems shocked or indignant, which makes me undecided whether to ask questions that I desire to ask very much, or to be silent and not know things. I wish you could speak to me; your face is so kind that I know your voice would be kind, too. I wonder what Dame would look like in a picture!

“Dear, beautiful lady, I haven’t kept my promise about Roseleaf. I promised to show her to you, but she was difficult to catch when she was very young, and she makes such a dreadful noise, that I do not think you would like it, and Roseleaf is growing larger every day, and the noise grows louder. If Dame should hear it—my! my! But I have an idea; if I can get you off the wall,

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I will take you to see Roseleaf, some day when
Dame is very busy."

Then I made another bow.

"I am going now ; good-bye."

I went softly down stairs and unchained Kit.

"You don't like staying in the house any more
than I do, do you Kit?"

Kit expressed his joy by whirling round and
round after his tail. I started for the sea but Kit
dashed off toward the woods.

"You want the woods, do you?"

Kit sat up and begged.

"Well, well, I suppose you want to see the rab-
bits and squirrels and a little life, like what my
poem says :

'I wandered far away and I was glad ;
I knew the rapture that the forest had ;
And every bird was good to me and said
A kindly word before I passed him by.
The cheery squirrel sat and ate his bread,
And did not fear me when I ventured nigh
His leafy solitude !'

IMAGINA

“You must remember, Kit, that my friends trust me. You can have your fun; but mind! you must not hurt any of these, my brothers.”

Kit and I followed the brook deep into the woods. Every day I learned new things about the birds, the little rustling life through the woods. Then I found on my walks all kinds of berries and nuts. But that was in the deep summer and autumn time.

“Kit,” said I, that morning after the storm, “I have a beautiful poem on spring. You love the spring as much as I do, so you ought to hear it. Listen!”

I drew from my pocket a piece of paper as I tramped along, but I hardly glanced at the paper, because I had read the lines so often, that I knew them by heart.

“ ‘For, lo, the winter is past.
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in the land.’ ”



IMAGINA

"I think the frog is heard in the land. Just hear what a noise they make. I wonder if that is the way they talk or sing to each other and what they talk about? Kit, I wish I could make Imagina come to life. I would like a real beautiful human being to talk to, a real mother to hold me and kiss me good-night, or a little playmate."

Kit wagged his tail and said, "Why can't you be happy with me? I am perfectly satisfied with you."

Suddenly I stood still in amazement.

Was I awake or dreaming?

There at the end of the vista, bending over the pool, was Imagina, all in white, her golden red hair hanging over her shoulders. For a moment I could not speak; then I held out my arms with a pitiful appeal.

"Imagina, Imagina, won't you come to me?"

But she did not hear. She rose, stepped back into the woods and disappeared.

IMAGINA

Was she real, or was it only a dream?

I had never seen anything like this before, never anything so beautiful. At night when I called, "Imagina!" in the mist, from my balcony, I could see a delicate form, but it never was real; and now in the daytime I had seen her yellow eyes and her golden red hair shining in the sun, as she rose and disappeared into the woods.

"Imagina! Imagina!" I called. "Come back to me!"

But she did not answer. I rubbed my eyes.

"Kit, where are you? If you had been near me, you would have known if the beautiful vision was real or only a dream."

Kit came running towards me.

"I only ran away for a moment," he said. "I saw a rabbit, but I did not hurt him. You can trust me."

And he looked into my troubled face.

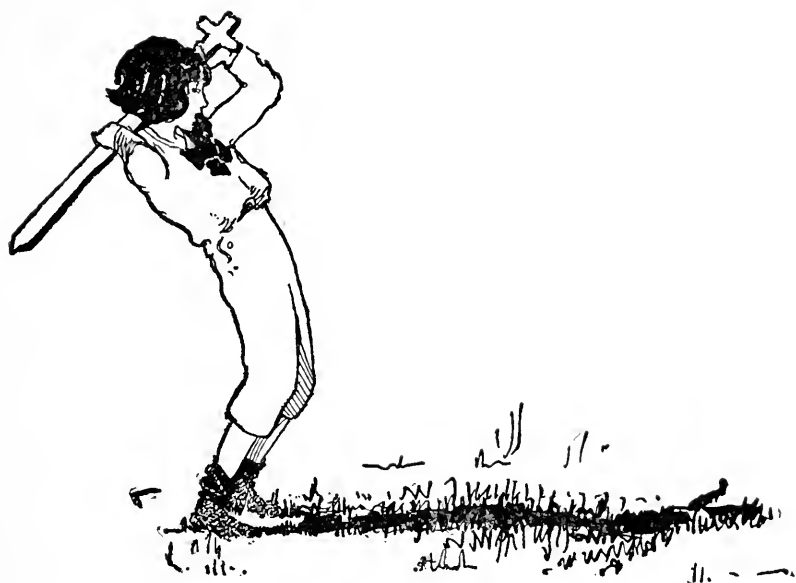
I sat down under a tree, and Kit sat down, too.

IMAGINA

Kit understood that I was watching for something and he stayed near me. I never took my eyes off one spot until the twilight grew so dark I knew I must go.

Then Kit and I trudged home.





CHAPTER IV

NOAH BEGAT

“**Y**OU are up very early, Rex. I never knew you to get up so early before,” Dame said to me the next morning. “It is such a beautiful spring day, you can take your lunch with you and go to the woods, but mind you come home early. It was dark when you got home last night. You haven’t told me yet what kept you.”

IMAGINA

I did not answer. I was thinking of Imagina. I had thought of nothing but the beautiful vision ever since I left the woods.

“Dreaming again? What kept you, I say?”

Before I could answer, she continued in a severe tone:

“I caught you again on your balcony in the moonlight talking to yourself. Now God forbid you should do these things. You know that is wrong, don’t you?”

“You told me not to do it,” I said quietly.

“That isn’t an answer.”

“I can’t see that it is wrong to look at the moon and the stars. I can’t see the moon and the stars in the daytime.”

“It’s wrong if I tell you not to do it and you do it, isn’t it?”

Just then, happily, Old Timothy came to ask for something, and I took this moment to go out as quietly as possible.

IMAGINA

I could hardly wait. Would the beautiful vision be there to-day? Kit and I hurried to the sacred spot to wait for her.

“Kit, I have made a discovery. It will interest you.”

We were sitting under the trees. I had finished digging up the earth to get worms for a little bird who was hopping near, and she was just love-lin-gering.

I knelt down and looked into Kit’s eyes.

“It’s all about shadows, Kit. Little shadows, my shadows. The wonderful thing about it is, I have never seen there were shadows before.”

I stood up and spread out my arms:

Then a shadow round me grew
And grew and grew and grew,
Until I was a giant
Long and tall—defiant.
Then I made a dash
And slashed him with my sword.

IMAGINA

Then I whirled and whirled around
Till the shadow on the ground
Shrank and shrivelled to a dwarf,
Fat and pudgy, dark and soft.
Then I made a dash
And slashed him with my sword.

Kit, who was generally ready for a frolic, refused to move, while I played all kinds of tricks with my shadow.

"See those shadow trees, Kit. See all the little branches that lie on the ground twisting and swaying as if they were alive. They are like live trees."

"Things are seldom what they seem," said Kit sceptically.

He had those moods after being up late. He sat there and refused to frolic, although he could be gayer than I when he pleased.

"The wonder is that these shadows have been here all the time, and we have only just seen them. There may be other things right near us now, and

IMAGINA

we may be looking at them and not see them.”

“Sounds spooky. I don’t like weird things.”

“Better take a nap and rest up,” I said.

“No, I never can sleep in the daytime.”

But he was just fooling himself when he said that, for he did take a nap.

I read my poems as Kit slept, and felt very happy as I read. All around me was quietness and silence, save only the soft murmurings of leaves, the dew-shine dance of running water, waters singing their wandering songs, the far-off sound of the tinkling bells on Timothy’s cows, the swaying of the purple iris on the bank, and the low hum of insects. I loved to shut my eyes and hear all these soft noises. Then I would open my eyes and read my poems.

“Thrush with the silver song,
Gramercy for your lay! . . .
To Romance you belong,
Thrush with the silver song,
And you bring the poet-throng
To our world of workaday.”

IMAGINA

"I will read this one to Imagina if she comes. She will like it."

I was reading intently when suddenly I heard the crackling of boughs.

In a moment I stood up.

"Imagina! Imagina! 'Hail, beauteous stranger of the grove! Thou messenger of Spring!'"

"Hail!" said the beautiful vision. "Hail!" she said, bowing to the ground.

"Are you Imagina, a real Imagina, my Vision come to life?" I asked in a whisper—I was so awed. "I have never seen anything so beautiful as your face, your lips, your eyes; your whole face is laughing. 'Beauteous stranger of the grove; beauteous messenger of Spring!' Are you Imagina?"

She bowed low again.

"I am your Imagina. What wish, noble youth, will you make?"

Her face was quite solemn; only her eyes

IMAGINA

laughed; they were yellow, with a little rim of brown around them.

"I would like to touch you," I said timidly, "to see if you are real."

"That is not permitted by the faeries. I shall disappear."

"Oh, please do not fade away again," I said, real terror in my face. "Stay and talk to me. I am very lonely. Did you come on the rays of the moon, Imagina, out of the mist?"

"No, I am afraid the rays would not hold me. I am not a vision. I am a faery, and faeries do not fade away; they disappear."

"Did a stork bring you, or have you a mother?"

"I have a faery mother."

She looked at me in a strange way, her eyes still smiling.

"It must be wonderful to have a mother," I answered.

My eyes were wide with intense interest.

IMAGINA

"Perhaps," I said, "an angel brought you to your mother."

"No, God brought me, so my mother says," she answered.

"I don't know God. I never met him. I know only Dame and Old Timothy and my friends. I think, though, Dame knows God. She says he is good, but God forbids so many things. He doesn't like my talking to my real friends. Dame seems to think I ought to know God, but when I ask her questions about God, she says I ought to be ashamed to talk the way I do about God. But she never explains anything to me; she seems to think I ought to know things without telling me about them. She says God is everywhere, and I have looked everywhere for God, except in the great wing of our house.

"First there is the library, with ever and ever so many books and a large fire-place. The shutters are always shut in that room and in many other

IMAGINA

rooms. The one over the library has a queer large window in the roof."

She was smiling now, and her whole face lighted up, especially her eyes; perhaps because I had talked so much. I had never talked so much before.

"Why do you smile?" I said.

I felt suddenly very sad. She had a faery mother, but I had none. Even a stork hadn't brought her. Large tears gathered in my eyes, but I still gazed at her.

She took a step suddenly forward. She no longer laughed; a more beautiful look came into her face and she said:

"I am sorry. Would you like to come and play with me?"

How I loved her, this beautiful, real Imagina! It seemed too good to be true. It was so wonderful. When she laughed I felt like laughing, too; but when her eyes smiled at me, I felt I did not

IMAGINA

understand. It was as if she said something to me in a foreign language.

"Oh, I love you," I said, gazing up into her lovely face. "I don't understand you but I love you. Promise me not to disappear. Will you come here again to-morrow and the next day?" I asked eagerly.

Imagina laughed.

"You are more beautiful when you laugh than my lady when she smiles," I said. "I was never happy like this before."

"Is Dame the lady?"

"Oh, no. Dame is very old. She was in the ark."

"What ark?"

"Why Noah Begat's ark. We have a book at home telling about it. Dame read about it once, but she does not like to talk about it. I spoke to her about it this morning."

Imagina's eyes began to smile and a twinkling



IMAGINA

light came into them. Again I felt there was something about this beautiful little faery being that I did not understand, but I went on:

“There are a great many men named Begat in that book: Abraham Begat and Noah Begat. But I like Noah Begat best of all. He lived a hundred and fifty years. That is a long time, isn’t it? I asked Dame once, if she was as old as Noah, but she doesn’t seem to like me to ask her questions. There are so many things that I would like to know. It is getting so late, I must go now,” I said sadly; “I will meet you here to-morrow. Will you come?”

“Yes,” she said. “Good-bye.”

And she waved her hand and danced away, her beautiful golden red hair shining in the sun’s lingering rays.



CHAPTER V

THE BUTTERFLY

BEFORE going to bed that night, I went out of doors and took from under a bush a large white shell that I had hidden there; then I went quickly past the moon-faced clock that made faces at me, and when I reached my room, I put the piece of paper over the baby's face in the picture; not that I didn't want the baby to see it, but I wanted the beautiful lady to see it first. Then I showed her my shell.

IMAGINA

“Dear Lady, when I put my ear to the shell, I hear a small voice whispering. Perhaps it is God’s voice.”

I held it up for her to hear and then I went to sleep.

No need to look out of the window in the mist for Imagina, now!

I must have slept heavily for I did not hear the bell, only a loud knocking on the door, and Dame entered. I sat up in bed rubbing my eyes.

“So you have overslept!” she exclaimed.

Then her sharp eye caught sight of the paper on the picture. It was the first time I had overslept myself.

“Why did you put that paper on the picture?” she asked.

For an answer I took the paper down before she could touch it. Then her eye caught sight of the shell.

IMAGINA

“You must not bring shells into the house; it gets sand all over the floor.”

Thinking to please her, although it is hard to please some people, I said:

“I think I hear God’s small voice in that shell; please let me keep it here.”

“That’s sacrilegious,” she said, as if that settled it.

But who Sacry Ligus was I didn’t dare ask.

I hurried my dressing as much as possible, while she took off the sheets from my four-poster bed to air, and then my heart sank as she took up my pillow. I knew the time would come, although I hoped she wouldn’t notice what I had done to it.

But she talked to herself, not to me: “Well, well, I never, such a pillow! Why, there is a hole in it, and the feathers are all coming out. Why didn’t you tell me the feathers were all coming out?”

IMAGINA

She tucked it under her arm to sew, and went out of the room, saying, "Hurry and dress."

But she didn't have to hurry me mornings now. What an escape I had! Lucky Robin Red Love's nest was built. How hard it was to hide things from Dame!

She never seemed to understand things about birds and trees and shells. When I was lonely, all these things spoke to me and I to them and I loved them.

I never gave a thought to the sea now. I was so impatient to go to the woods to see Imagina that Kit and I hurried there every morning as early as possible.

We were to have a picnic to-day. So I gathered wild strawberries and put them into a little basket of dried grasses which I had made, then covered them up with the cool green leaves. I searched for a nice rock for a table formed in such a way that the rocks below it made a seat. I gathered

IMAGINA

some pretty wild-flowers and put them in a shell on the rock-table. I used big, clean shells for plates and put leaves under them, and I found smaller ones for cups and filled them with water from the running brook. I set a place for Kit, too.

Kit was very much excited over all the preparations. He looked at the table, then at me and sat up and begged. I usually threw him a piece of bread or meat when I got out my lunch.

"No, Kit," I said, "the little lady faery must be waited on first; then you and I can have our turn."

"You never prepared all this wonderful arrangement for me or for yourself," Kit said. "Is this the way little men are affected by the presence of a beautiful little lady with golden hair and amber eyes?"

"Surely, Kit," said I, watching his interest, "this is all for the lovely lady Imagina, whom I love."

IMAGINA

“So you love me?” said a voice quite near me.

I had not noticed her, I was so intent on arranging my table.

“Yes, I love you, Imagina,” I said. “I love you better than my father. Dame says it is my duty to love my father, but he seems like Thor in the primer. He comes in a cloud and goes in a cloud, and he doesn’t smile. He is always in a hurry and when he goes away he always has to catch something. I don’t know what it is he has to catch and I have never seen it.”

That twinkling light came in her eyes again. That light always disturbed me. It gave me a strange feeling and I couldn’t tell whether it was in my head or around my heart. I tried to forget it. I was too proud to ask why she looked that way. I waved my hand toward the feast saying, “My faery love, the feast is laid.”

She made a low bow, patted Kit, and we all sat down.

IMAGINA

“What a jolly picnic!” Imagina said. “Such beautiful, sweet strawberries—. Where did you get the nuts?”

“Oh, I saved them last fall.”

“But how did you make the potatoes so hot?”

“Oh, I cooked them. Shall I show you my fire?”

I showed her my stove that I had made in the rocks.

“To-morrow I will bake an apple for you.”

“What fun, what fun!” she exclaimed, laughing merrily, and I laughed, too.

I had never laughed like that before. It sounded strange to me. I liked laughing like that.

“I would like to have a picnic here every day, and you can show me how to bake the apples,” Imagina said, leaning over to pat Kit.

As she did so, her hand caught in the gold chain that hung around her bare neck. The clasp gave ’way and it fell in the grass.

IMAGINA

“Oh! I have lost my chain and my little lucky stone.”

“I will find it for you, Imagina.”

And I trailed my hands over the long grass.

“I hope you can find it; my mother gave it to me; she brought it from Egypt; it was buried in the tomb of an Egyptian Princess.”

“Here it is, Imagina. Come and see how beautiful it is in the long grass, before you pick it up. All the colours of the rainbow are in it. I think the rainbow must have been buried with the Princess. Did your mother know the Princess?”

“Oh, Moses!” laughed Imagina in a tone I didn’t like.

She then placed both hands on the ground, bending her body like a bow until her head touched the grass.

This proceeding I watched with interest.

“What are you doing, Imagina? Your face is getting very red.”

IMAGINA

Laughing, she looked up between her hands.

"It's called a summer-sault, and girls do it until they are twelve, and then stop. Boys continue to do it, unless they get fat."

Without further warning, she hurled her legs in the air, over she turned and landed on her feet, laughing merrily at my astonishment.

"It's a trick of perfection," said Kit. "Teach me immediately."

Imagina put Kit's head on the ground and over and over he went.

"It's your turn now, Rex."

But I folded my arms by way of showing my determination not to give myself up to such a performance, and said, "I don't like it, and I won't do it."

Imagina turned to leave me, when suddenly she exclaimed:

"Oh, isn't it beautiful! I must have it!"

"Have what?" I said.

IMAGINA

“That beautiful golden-blue butterfly.”

And she snatched up her hat and ran after the butterfly.

“Oh, don’t catch it,” I pleaded.

“But I want it,” she said, determined.

“If you hit it with your hat, you will break its wings.”

She caught it in her hat and held the hat to the ground, slipped her right hand under the hat, caught the butterfly, and with her left hand picked up a sharp stone and crushed the head of the butterfly.

I rushed forward and held her by the arm, but it was too late.

“How could you be so cruel? You are a cruel faery! How could you kill it, it was so beautiful?”

I looked down at the butterfly; its beautiful gold wings with the large blue spots that looked like eyes, rose slowly, then fell to the ground. The

IMAGINA

sight was too much for me. I threw myself on the ground near the butterfly and wept.

Imagina stood over me.

"I am going home, and I am going to take the butterfly," she said, her face red with anger.

Then she lifted her little foot, and kicked me in the side.

"Boys and men never cry, only girls cry," she said. "Get up!"

I got up.

"I am going to take the butterfly home," she continued.

I looked at her but did not speak. She glanced at the butterfly, then at me, but moved away.

"I am going home and I am not coming to-morrow," she said, her pretty face still very red.

I did not move or speak, but she made no offer to pick up the butterfly.

After I was sure she had gone, I threw myself on the ground again, with my head on my arm, but

IMAGINA

I did not cry. Kit came up gently, and I was grateful for his understanding and loving heart. He kissed my hand. I lay there with my heart broken. If it hadn't been for Dame, I would have stayed there all night.

But even with broken hearts we must come back and do the things we don't want to do. I placed the butterfly on a soft bed of grass, deep hid among the ferns. I couldn't help two tears falling on its soft, delicate wings, but I didn't cry. Then with Kit by my side, I walked by the winding brook home, wondering if I should ever see my cruel, beautiful faery playmate again.

I met Old Timothy on his way to the house.

"Timothy," said I, "are some of the faeries wicked and cruel?"

"Oh, sure they are."

"Are some of them good?"

"Oh, sure they are."

"How do you know?" I said quickly.

IMAGINA

Timothy stood still.

"Well," he said after a silence, "faeries are not much in my line. Come to think of it, I can't say I ever saw one myself. I only heard tell of them."

"Timothy," I said solemnly, "I have seen and played with one for the last week. She was a wicked faery, and she disappeared, and I shall never see her again. She was very beautiful."

"No!" said Timothy astonished.

"Timothy, if you loved any one wicked, would you give her up, or go on loving her?"

"Lor, Master Rex," was all his answer, "you are a queer boy."

And he walked quickly on.

"Timothy," I said quickly, following him as he walked into the kitchen, "I wish I could find out the truth of things. It seems a difficult thing to do."

But Old Timothy was better at making remarks than at answering questions. After nodding his

IMAGINA

head, he sat down in his rocking chair near the window, thinking, while I sat down at the table, and gazed out of the window, dreaming of Imagina.

“Why don’t you eat your supper?” Dame asked, eyeing me sharply. “Don’t you feel well?”

“I feel well, but I am not hungry.”

“You have been in the woods a good deal lately. Perhaps it would be better for you to go to the sea to-morrow.”

“I like the woods better, and there is more to do there,” I said, a fear creeping into my heart, for I thought she might make me go to the sea-shore.

I raised my eyes and caught Old Timothy looking at me. We exchanged glances, for we understood each other. His glance said: “Trust me, for I won’t tell about the wicked faery.” Old Timothy and I kept our secrets from Dame many

IMAGINA

a time. Dame wasn't the kind of a woman you trusted secrets to.

"Dear Virgin," I said that night, as I covered the baby with the brown paper, "I used to be lonely, but now I have a feeling in my heart that I never had before. It hurts and it's worse than lonely. I love a wicked, cruel faery, who kills beautiful creatures in the air, and I have a sore spot in my side where she kicked me, and yet, dear Lady, I want to see her and love her some more, for I know I shall always love this wicked, cruel faery. I can't pray not to love her, and I hope you understand, because Dame and Old Timothy wouldn't understand. Perhaps God would, but I can't find him. Seems as if you had to understand things all by yourself. I can't seem to share what I think with anybody. Perhaps Imagina will understand some day—if she ever comes back."

Then I remembered the twinkle in her eye that

IMAGINA

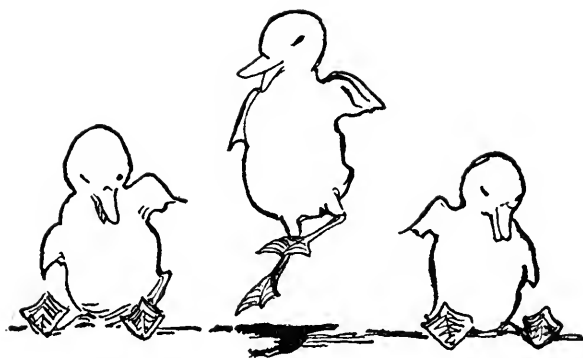
prevented me many times from opening my *whole* heart to her.

“Why do I want to go back to my wicked, cruel faery, I wonder!”

Then I lay me down in my little bed.

The lovely lady still smiled, and under her tender smile, I fell asleep, comforted.





CHAPTER VI

THE MOVING CURTAIN

THE following morning I was awakened by the rain coming down in torrents against my window-panes.

No woods, no Imagina to-day! I felt like letting torrents of tears drop on this side of the window-pane, but I remembered what Imagina said about boys crying.

“Take your primer and go to your room and study,” ordered Dame after breakfast.

There was no need to study that book. I knew it by heart.

On the way to my own room, a desire to look

IMAGINA

through the key-hole into that locked room possessed me. I looked and again saw those wonderful books, in the big closet with the glass door reaching to the ceiling. Oh, if I could only get to them!

I passed on to a long narrow hall, where a leaded window glowed with wonderful colours, but I couldn't see through it.

I pushed my hand against the window. It creaked. This startled me, everything was so silent. I looked all around. I had never seen Dame in this narrow, dark hall.

With the fear of being discovered I pushed again, the window flew open, and on the impulse of the moment, I jumped through the casement into the room and shut the casement after me. Then I faced the room with wonder and interest.

It was very large with rows upon rows of books behind glass doors. There was a huge fireplace with seats in it, and the sides were carved with



IMAGINA

beautiful designs. At one end of the room there was a painting of a man—a young man, tall and big like my father, who always disappeared up the lane into the clouds. But my father had grey hair and a grey moustache and beard, and this man had dark brown hair and a smooth face.

Then there was a piece of gold furniture with strings on it. It was higher on one side than on the other, and had gold feet on one side. I touched the strings; they made a sound like the wind when it is unhappy. Two strings were broken. There was a fan on the stool near it with lovely ladies without clothes dancing on it, probably faeries, although my faery wore clothes. Then I remembered Imagina and I was sad for a moment, but I soon became interested again.

There was a long carved black box, and over the box there hung a picture of ugly men fighting. It had no frame and was stretched and nailed at the top and hung down. It looked like some of

IMAGINA

Dame's needlework. As the wind gave a long, low howl, the ugly men moved out towards me, which frightened me so terribly that I moved back, and then they all drew in.

Who could be behind it? I took courage and tried to lift the curtain picture. Just then the wind cried out again and the ugly men swelled up and hit me. I jumped back frightened, as I felt a cold wind pass over me. What was behind that curtain pushing the ugly men out to me?

I wanted to run away from that queer room and the moving curtain, but I didn't. Although I was frightened, I was fascinated, thrilled, held there. Perhaps some living person was behind that curtain; perhaps it was God. Perhaps a wild animal was there, and would turn me into things if I looked at it; perhaps it would jump out at me and eat me.

I really knew that couldn't be, but I was picturing and dreaming all kinds of wonderful things,

IMAGINA

as I stood looking at the curtain. Perhaps there was some one or something guarding a hidden entrance to the strange room over it which had no windows in the sides, only a slanting, big glass window in the roof.

I had a keen desire to get into that room above, where you could look out of the window and see only the sky, no trees or land.

The wind howled and the ugly men moved again. I wanted to touch the curtain or lift it up, but I did not dare. I stepped back, frightened. My eyes wandered to a long table. On the table was a little white glove, but it had a long glove arm on it, and was dusty, and nearby was a straw bonnet with pink roses and ribbons.

These things couldn't be Dame's; they were too pretty and bright.

Somehow I didn't like to touch them, so I crossed to the glass doors where the books were, but I kept my eye on the moving curtain.

IMAGINA

There was a great red book and a green one with gold letters. Some were nine times larger than my primer. There was a key in the door. I opened it timidly and pulled out the great red book. I had no idea a book could be so heavy; it fell with a loud noise to the floor. The noise startled me. I stepped back; the wind howled and the curtain moved; but I couldn't run away, I wanted so much to look into the book, so I opened it.

Oh, what a wonderful book! Ladies and babies without any clothes; men in dresses trimmed with lace, and their hair curled like Imagina's. I wondered how Old Timothy would like a suit like that. And coloured pictures of a wonderful city called Venice, with water-streets, so beautiful it must have been faeryland. But what held my eye with delight was a great cathedral called St. Mark's. On the next page was a picture of the inside: a long aisle and on an altar candles burn-

IMAGINA

ing; and coloured lights in a great window, and men in gorgeous coloured coats. A feeling of reverence and quiet for the beauty of it crept into my heart. Was it a real place? Would I ever be able to go there? I must ask Imagina if that was where she came from.

There were other cathedrals that looked like great icicles standing up, and a great high steeple going into the sky. But I loved the St. Mark's best of all, with its great high round domes, and round arches and beautiful coloured mosaics, and flags flying from poles in front of it.

I sat on the floor and forgot all about the curtain. I didn't realise how long I sat looking at that book and another called "Stories of Italian Painters," by Vasari, with a great many ladies like my beautiful Lady Virgin in it; such interesting, exciting stories all about men who were artists and began to draw and paint when they were my age.

IMAGINA

What a strange world it was outside my quiet world! What wonderful things they did there. Think of all those books and the wonderful time I would have, if Dame didn't find out. Long winter days and rainy days! Perhaps I would find poems and more pictures, only I would have to be more careful and not miss my dinner, as I had to-day, or be late for my supper.

It was now so dark I could hardly see, so I carefully put the books back and hurried to the casement that opened into the hall, and opened it cautiously. As it was quite dark, I groped my way out. When I reached the kitchen, I dreaded to enter, for I did not know what punishment might be in store for me. I heard Dame and Old Timothy both talking at the same time.

"Yes, they had a narrow escape," Timothy said, as I entered.

Both were bending over a brood of newly hatched little ducks, whose feathers were wet and

IMAGINA

stringy. Most of them were lying on their backs.

Dame turned at the opening of the door.

"Where have you been, Master Rex? This is a nice time for you to come to your supper. Where have you been all day? You were not here for dinner, and you did not take it with you. Where have you been?"

Something stirred within me. I felt very determined, and in a tone I never dared use to Dame, I said:

"From now on, I do not intend to tell what I am thinking about, where I go, nor everything I do, whether you punish me or not."

"Oh, you don't! Perhaps—"

Here Old Timothy came to the rescue.

"I think this one looks as if it would die."

"Die! Which one?" said Dame.

And so intent on the duck was she that she entirely forgot me. So Timothy saved me a punishment that day.

IMAGINA

"I think we had better give it a little drop of whiskey and water. I will hold the duck and you can pour the liquor down its throat," said Old Timothy, smiling.

I had often said to myself I would try to get courage to inform Dame that I would not tell her everything I was thinking about, or everywhere I went. I had never been able to do so; but now that I had said the words out loud, it helped me, and forever after I would stand by it.

If I had told her the facts, that room would have been barred from me forever. It was worth the hardest punishment I had ever had to keep my secret. I wondered what Imagina would say, if she could see that room with all those books and the moving ugly men. This made me think of Imagina. Perhaps I would never see her again.

It was fortunate for me that I had found that room. When you are very lonely and unhappy,

IMAGINA

it sort of quiets your heart to be busy and interested in things.

I wondered if I dared take Kit there. No, it wasn't safe, he might bark at the curtain. But I would have to tell him.

"Instead of standing there looking like a wooden image that wouldn't move unless you wound it up, come and hold this little duck while I wrap this wet one in my old woollen shawl," said Dame.

The little duck, that had been given whiskey, was now on his legs, unsteady legs. With a proud air, he was holding his head high.

"Seems as if the whiskey had gone to his head," said Old Timothy, smiling and winking at me. "Feel pretty happy, Ducky? Felt like that myself once—felt as if I owned the earth—felt—"

"That is sufficient in regard to your feelings. It is not a fit subject to talk about before a child," said Dame, wrapping up the wet duck. "Rex, you can go to bed now."

IMAGINA

Before I went to bed, I stole out to say good-night to Kit. I was afraid his feelings would be hurt. I hadn't seen him all day.

Wagging his tail with an affectionate look, Kit said: "Hello, I am glad to see you, but where have you been all day?"

I started to explain and then I realised it was best to keep this secret from Kit, so I only patted him.

But dogs are so wise. He knew I was keeping something from him and he just looked patient. Perhaps some of God was in him. I heard Old Timothy say once to Dame, "God must be all patience."

When I reached my room, I pinned the paper over the baby in the picture. There are some things you don't want babies to hear.

"Dear Lady, seems as if you are the only one to whom I can tell *all* my secrets. I thought People ought to share all their secrets with those they

IMAGINA

love, but it is not true. I find I can't tell Kit about my new secret, because Kit is so curious and so brave, that if I told him about the curtain, he would want to clear up that mystery immediately, and he would do it in such a noisy way that he would spoil everything. All secrets have to be kept quiet. I can tell him things I can't tell Imagina. I love Imagina, though she is wicked. I can tell *her* about the secret room, but I can not tell her how I buried the butterfly deep in the ferns, nor about the two tears dropped on its wings. Neither do I want to tell her about you and the baby. These things I hide from her because of a strange twinkle in her amber eyes. She wouldn't understand.

"I am getting puzzled about many things."



CHAPTER VII

THE MERMAIDS

KIT and I wandered off to the sea-shore and climbed out on the great projecting rocks.

The water covers most of these rocks when the tide comes in, and when the tide goes out all the white water seems to say: "We must hurry and find a place to hide, or our master, Great Tide, will carry us out to sea. We are tired of travelling." And then the little waves whisper to each other and glide here and there to find a comfortable pool, and make little murmuring noises; then they nestle down and shake off their caps and tremble no longer with excitement, but lie very still, rest, sleep perhaps, nestling warm in the sun.

IMAGINA

There was one great rock, the biggest of all, that was my favourite. I had to help Kit up, it was so steep. I loved to look over the edge into the deep green water. It was very clear to-day and I could see away down, but I could not see the bottom.

"Look, Kit! I see something moving down there. I think I see mermaids."

"By what process of reasoning do you reach that conclusion?" said Kit, unmoved.

I didn't pay any attention to his remark. There were times when he wanted every fact explained.

"I can see something very beautiful—shimmering; perhaps it is her silver tail!"

"A fish, probably," interrupted Kit.

"And something soft and beautiful, and something flowing like golden hair."

"I have my doubts," said Kit.

"You didn't believe in faeries."

"True," said Kit, resignedly.

"I see! I see! Oh, I wish they would come near

IMAGINA

the surface. There are a lot of little fishes rippling the water now.”

This was too much for Kit. Curiosity got the better of him and he came forward and we both looked over the edge of the rock trying to see the mermaids.

“I am going to call them, Kit:

I’m Rex and here’s Kit and we want you to play,

Please, Mermaid, you mustn’t be scary!

That cave is too small where you’re trying to hide,

Your hand and your hair and your foot are outside—

O why won’t you come where it’s airy?

I’ll carry you round, if you can’t walk astride,

I’ll hold you on Kit and he’ll give you a ride,

And I think I can find you a fairy!

O won’t you come out with us, Mermaid, and play!

Please, Mermaid, come out where it’s sunny!

I saw you shoot in with the foam of the tide,

And the edge of you shows, though you cuddle inside,

And it looks like a row of new money.—

O Mermaid, I wish you would teach me to slide

Like a wave in the water!—I’ve tried and I’ve tried,

And I never can do it; it’s funny.—

O there you are, there you are!—Don’t go away!

IMAGINA

"I am so excited about the mermaids! Wouldn't it be wonderful if mermaids really came. What would you say, Kit?"

"I would say that the monotony of our life would be broken. What with a faery in the woods, and mermaids by the sea, life would be far from dull."

And we looked down into the deep green water, hoping they would come.

"I am sure I see something moving now. It must be the mermaids," I said joyfully.

But they did not come, though we waited a long time.

Finally Kit became so bored that he said, impatiently, "Let us go back to the woods. I like the faeries better. They at least have legs." And he glanced at his own legs.

"You needn't be so proud, Kit, because you have four."

"I can't imagine myself without them. I would



IMAGINA

be an object of ridicule, a mere worm," said he, with his head in the air.

He ran to the edge of the rock: "Come, let us go."

On the way to the woods, there was a conflict in my mind between my love and my desire to visit the mysterious room; and my love conquered. I felt I must go to the woods to see if Imagina had come back.

Kit and I waited so long Kit fell asleep. As I lay under the tree, it seemed as if the spirit of the wind spoke to me, and I said to the wind this poem:

Surely the wind is human,
Just the same as I.
Cold nights when I am lonely
I can hear him cry.

Summer noons I hear him
Hum low soft tunes in the sky;
Autumn days he is angry
And hurls the leaves up high

IMAGINA

And tears the clouds and the tree roots:

Oh, I wonder why!

Surely the wind too wonders

Just the same as I.

Suddenly something tickled my nose; I brushed it off and tried to sleep again, but my nose was tickled so often that I sat up, and there was Imagina laughing at me—a merry, merry laugh; so *I* laughed, just for joy.

Then she sat down, suddenly, and quickly she threw her arms about me and kissed me on the mouth. Then she rolled over on the grass and sat up and laughed.

But what I did or said I can't remember. I felt queer all over. No one had ever kissed me before. I was so surprised I couldn't move. I only know I didn't laugh.

"What is the matter with you?" said Imagina.

I didn't answer.

"Didn't you like it?" said she.

I managed to say, "Yes."

IMAGINA

“Then why do you look so queer?”

Here again was something I couldn't tell her.

“Well, you are a queer shy boy. I suppose that is the reason.”

“Am I like boys that you know?”

“O dear, no!”

“What do they do?”

“They play games, and they don't like it if girls win. They always make a noise and they climb trees and sometimes they quarrel. Once they quarrelled, and one boy upset the glue bottle on the head of the boy he was quarrelling with.”

“I would like to play games. What are they?”
I inquired, fascinated.

“Oh, foot-ball, and follow-master; but those take a lot of boys. Then there is Mumble-de-peg and See-who-can-spit-the-farthest, and—”

“Teach me Mumble-de-peg,” I said, interrupting her, eager to begin.

Imagina pulled a little knife out of her pocket,

IMAGINA

picked up a twig near her, and hammered it into the ground; then she showed me how to throw the knife. She played very well at first and I played badly. Suddenly then it seemed easy, and I forgot about Imagina in the interest of the game. I felt delight in catching up to her, then passing her and winning. Then I looked at her.

"I didn't think you could play games," she said. "Now I must pull the peg."

And she proceeded to clasp the dirty peg with her pretty white teeth.

"What are you doing?" I cried.

She looked up and exclaimed:

"I lost the game, so I will have to pull the peg with my teeth."

"You shall not pull that dirty peg with your teeth. You didn't say anything about that," I said.

"Oh, I forgot to explain about the peg; I lost, so I must pull it."

IMAGINA

“You shall not pull the peg with your pretty white teeth, Imagina.”

I pulled up the peg with my hands and threw it away. And then, as I wasn't sure what she might do, like Old Timothy, I changed the subject quickly.

“Imagina, I have a secret. I will tell you, if you will promise not to tell.”

Imagina moved nearer to me, alert:

“I will cross my heart and never tell.”

“In one of the larger towers of our house is a library. The door is always locked, but I can peep through the key-hole. Well, I determined to get into that room, so I climbed through the casement. There is a curtain in the room with pictures of ugly men on it. When I entered, the ugly men moved towards me, then they moved back again. I think something must have been behind it.”

“Did you look?” Imagina asked eagerly.

“No, I didn't look; it made me feel creepy. I

IMAGINA

was so anxious to see the books, I forgot about the curtain. There were pictures of beautiful ladies, pictures of cathedrals, pictures of Rome, Venice and Florence."

"I lived there once," Imagina interrupted.

"In Florence, Imagina?"

"On the outskirts."

"On the outskirts?" I questioned.

It seemed a queer place to live, but then she was a faery, and I suppose she could live anywhere, even on an outskirt, whatever that was. I didn't know much about outskirts.

For a long time I looked at her, wondering whether it would be well to ask her, but her eyes were twinkling, so I decided not to.

"Venice must be a beautiful place, isn't it?"

"Yes," Imagina said. "It is the most beautiful place in the world. It was made for faeries, Rex. You would love it. Some day we must go there.

"On gala days, the big canal and marble palaces

IMAGINA

are decked in gay colours, the balconies hung with rugs, and red, green and gold silks—and flowers. And they paddle you around the water-streets in gondolas, and the gondoliers are dressed in white, with gold and red sashes like little girls.

“It is all so beautiful that father used to let me sit up very late at night. It almost takes your breath away, to glide in a gondola, by moonlight, through the dimly lighted water-streets, under bridges, winding in and out like a puzzle, gliding along so quietly. Suddenly little faces peep out at you from door-ways and from lighted windows above, over boxes filled with flowers. And the men and women sing, and play on guitars, in the streets and in the gondolas.

“My father said, when we were in Venice, that nearly all the great men and women in Europe had been there, especially the great artists and literary men. Among them were Leonardo, Michael Angelo, Titian, Byron, Wagner and Browning—

IMAGINA

Oh, many more, only I have forgotten their long names. And he showed me where they lived."

"Did you live in Venice, Imagina?"

"Yes, for a year, and then we went to live in a little hill-town near Venice, called Asola. Many years ago they gave that town to Caterina Corona, Queen of Cyprus. She was called the Lady of Asola.

"They took her kingdom from her and, to make it up to her, the Senators of Venice gave her Asola, and four thousand people to be in her train."

"Four thousand people! What did she do with all those people?"

"Oh, some were soldiers, courtiers, dwarfs; some, ladies who dressed her."

"Do ladies dress queens?" I interrupted.
"That's queer."

"Oh, yes; they never put on their own stockings. They lived a very gay life there, but when war broke out, she went to Venice and died there in her

IMAGINA

palace Corona. I saw the palace.— Are you listening, Rex?”

She nudged me with her elbow.

“What are you looking at, so far away, with your big eyes so wide open?”

“I was listening; only I was with you in Venice, not here. I would like to go to Venice with you.”

While we were talking about Venice, the library and the tower, Imagina said:

“Come, let us go immediately to see the library and what is behind the curtain. Then we must try to get up to that mysterious room without any windows except one in the roof.”

I had it in mind that I had better investigate that room by myself, but I would show her the large library.

“Do you know what would happen if I took you to the house, Imagina? Dame would never let me play with you again, if she knew you were a faery.”
(I came near saying a wicked faery.) “Besides, if

IMAGINA

she caught us in that room, I would never be allowed to visit it again, never. Think what that would mean during the long winter days when I am alone!”

“Rex,” she said decidedly, “I am going to see that room some day.”

“Some day,” seemed safe at present, but I did not answer her. Then, after thinking a few moments, her face got red, she stamped her foot and said:

“I am going to see that room now, for I am going away soon, and I am going away for a long time.”

“No, Imagina, I can’t take you just yet. It is impossible,” I said, regretfully.

She was very angry, and as she came near me she raised her foot to kick me.

“Imagina,” I said, “if you kick me again, I will tie your legs together.”

I did not move.

IMAGINA

“You’re only a softy, and you can’t. You’re not strong enough.”

She lifted her foot to kick me, but I caught it and she fell down. Quickly I pulled a string out of my pocket and tied her legs; then I held both her hands. She was so surprised that she didn’t move.

“Imagina,” I said, “you are a wicked faery, but I wish you would try to be good because I love you. I love you better than any one in the world. Promise me you will try to be a good faery.”

“No, I would rather be a bad faery, and I will change you into a wild animal.”

“If you change me into a wild animal,” I said, “I might eat you up.”

“Animals never eat faeries,” she answered quickly.

“You can not frighten me,” I said, undaunted, as I held her hands tighter, “because I love you, and I want you to be a good faery.”

It was my time now to be surprised.

IMAGINA

She dropped her golden curly head on my shoulder and said, coaxingly: "I will be a good faery, if you will show me that room."

"Imagina," I said, letting one hand go but holding her other tenderly in my hand, "if I could make a good faery of you, I would be willing to run the risk of never seeing that room again, but if Dame saw you there, she might try to prevent my ever seeing you again. I love you, I love you, and it would break my heart not to see you any more."

"You love me and you tie my legs!"

She looked down at her little legs and burst out laughing.

I untied the string.

Without another word about the mysterious room, she got up and said, "It is getting late and we must go home."

She went a few steps and then—she was so impulsive I never knew what she would do next—she

IMAGINA

ran back and threw her pretty white arms around my neck and whispered:

“I am glad you won that game, I didn’t think you could play games. You are brave and good. I thought you were a softy, but you are not; and you are not like other boys; that’s why I love you. You tell me wonderful stories, and you show me all the beautiful things in the woods and by the sea-shore. Perhaps some day I will be a good faery—It isn’t fun being too good. Kiss me.”

Now why is it that, when you are offered the thing you would rather have than anything else in the world, you hesitate?

I hesitated one moment; I was so overcome.

In that moment she pulled her pretty face away and ran off, laughing and dancing and waving her pretty bare arms in the air, as she sang the faery song I had taught her:

“The faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,

IMAGINA

Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh, and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue—”

And then, when I could see her no longer, I heard
her still singing:

“When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung,
The lonely of heart has withered away.”

Then her voice died away and she was gone.

I felt as if I would like to be a faery, too, and
dance away with her; then perhaps the wind would
laugh and sing for me, and my heart would no
longer be lonely.

All that day she had not spoken of the butterfly
or of her anger when she left me. She seemed
entirely to have forgotten it. To her it was a thing
of the past, but it came to my mind many times.
She seemed always to live in to-day; she had no
thoughts about yesterday or to-morrow; and I
wondered if that was the reason she was so happy,
or if the faeries were always happy.

IMAGINA

So Imagina was gone away!

I trudged home through the lonely woods with Kit. I walked into the brook twice—but I only wet my shoes—I was so absorbed thinking about Imagina, all her pretty and naughty ways and the things she taught me.

“Kit,” I said, as we neared home, “Kit, I would like to be like other boys. Do you think I could play that game they call Spit?”

Kit wagged his tail and said, “You won at Mumble-de-peg.”

So with Kit for an audience, I spit.

I was not very successful.

Then we tramped on.

As I tied Kit for the night, I said to him:

“Kit, that game of Spit doesn’t interest me.”

And Kit replied, confidently:

“I don’t care for the game myself.”



CHAPTER VIII

THE MYSTERIOUS DOOR

ONE morning, during Imagina's absence, I made up my mind to find a way into the room above the library, but first I went out and gave Kit his breakfast. I untied his chain, we sat down together and he watched me throw crumbs to Master Rob and his love. Then I called Kit back to his house and tied his chain.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Kit, his expressive tail hanging limp. "What! no woods to-day? Things aren't as they used to be; what's up?"

With sorrowful eyes, he watched me walk back to the house. It was the first thing I had kept back from Kit, and he knew it and was hurt; yet I couldn't tell him.

IMAGINA

“Kit,” said I, walking back to pat his head, “I have a secret which I can’t tell you, but I want you to be reasonable about it, for I love you just the same.”

“It’s all right now you have explained,” Kit said, wagging his tail. “I didn’t tell you where I hid my bone the last time, and I know of another secret, one that will interest you. I’ll tell you some other time.”

I went back to the house happier.

There is nothing like having an understanding about things with people and dogs. If you are kind and square with a dog, he will be so with you.

I tip-toed up the long hall to the window and entered the library. There were all the books and the curtain with the ugly men. Now for the courage to go behind that curtain!

I went slowly forward. Fortunately for me the ugly men did not move. The ghost, or faery, or God, that was behind it must have gone away. I

IMAGINA

lifted the curtain and there I saw a winding staircase. It was very dark but I groped my way up the stairs on my hands and knees. At the top there was a little hall and a door. I opened the door and walked into a very large room. The first thing I saw was a picture of a young girl and her eyes looked straight into mine. They were large grey-blue eyes like mine and she had heavy dark wavy hair and a pale face like mine. The room was quite dark and the picture was dark too, only her pale face shone out and her large eyes smiled into mine. She had on a velvet dress, not like Dame's high in the neck, but cut out like Imagina's so it showed her neck, and hanging from her shoulders an ermine robe fell all over the floor like the Queen's in my primer; and a row of little stars shone in her hair.

Who was she to look so like me that it startled me? Who was she? Old Timothy had told me I never had a sister, so she couldn't be my sister.

IMAGINA

Then suddenly it came to me. She must have been my mother, and no stork had brought me.

I went up to the picture and put my face against hers and said, "My Mother! Now I know I have a mother too."

I stayed there a long time, and then I looked around the room. It was filled with wonderful paintings, drawings, landscapes and portraits. In one corner was an easel and on it an unfinished picture that was very beautiful. There was a large paint-box with brushes, also a large piece of shining dark wood with a hole in it, and on it were paints all mixed together.

In one end of the room were beautiful drawings, some framed, some just pinned on the wall, and some in a portfolio. On a great many of these drawings and pictures names were written in the corners. Leonardo da Vinci was one name. All the women in these pictures had a smile, and they smiled like the Lady Virgin in my room. I won-

IMAGINA

dered if there were beautiful women in the world who could smile like that. 'Would I ever see one? Imagina had a beautiful smile, but then she was a faery.

At the other end of the room I found a carved mysterious door. I think it must have been a door, although it had no knob or key-hole. I tried to find a place to open it, but it would not open. I pounded on the door and it seemed as if someone pounded on the other side. I pounded again, and there was the same response. It made me feel creepy, so I turned away and looked again at the pictures.

I was so absorbed in the drawings and pictures that I forgot about the window. I looked up and there it was, with a shade drawn over it which made the room quite dark. I made up my mind the next time I came I would pull back the shade so the great room would be lighter.

It was now so dark there I couldn't see what

IMAGINA

time of day it was, but for fear of being late I left reluctantly. What joy I felt in having all those things to look at!

I descended the stairs to the library and, after closing the casement, went into the yard. I untied Kit and we went into the barn to find Old Timothy. He was piling up tomatoes.

"Timothy," said I, "ought you to tell the truth always?"

"O sure!" said Timothy, continuing to work, without looking up.

"Is it wicked to tell a lie?"

"O sure!"

"Did I ever have a mother?"

"See here, Master Rex, I am late to-night. Don't you want to give me a hand here?"

"Timothy," said I seriously, "you can't put me off like that, the way you do Dame. I am going to know the truth. Did a mother or a stork bring me?"

IMAGINA

“Well, you see, a stork bringing babies isn’t exactly a lie; it’s a faery tale.”

I was determined to make Old Timothy tell me the truth.

“I am going to know the truth about some things,” I said, “and you have got to tell me. Is that a portrait of my mother—the one that hangs in the room with a window in the roof? Where does the door lead to at the end—that strange carved door without a knob or key-hole?”

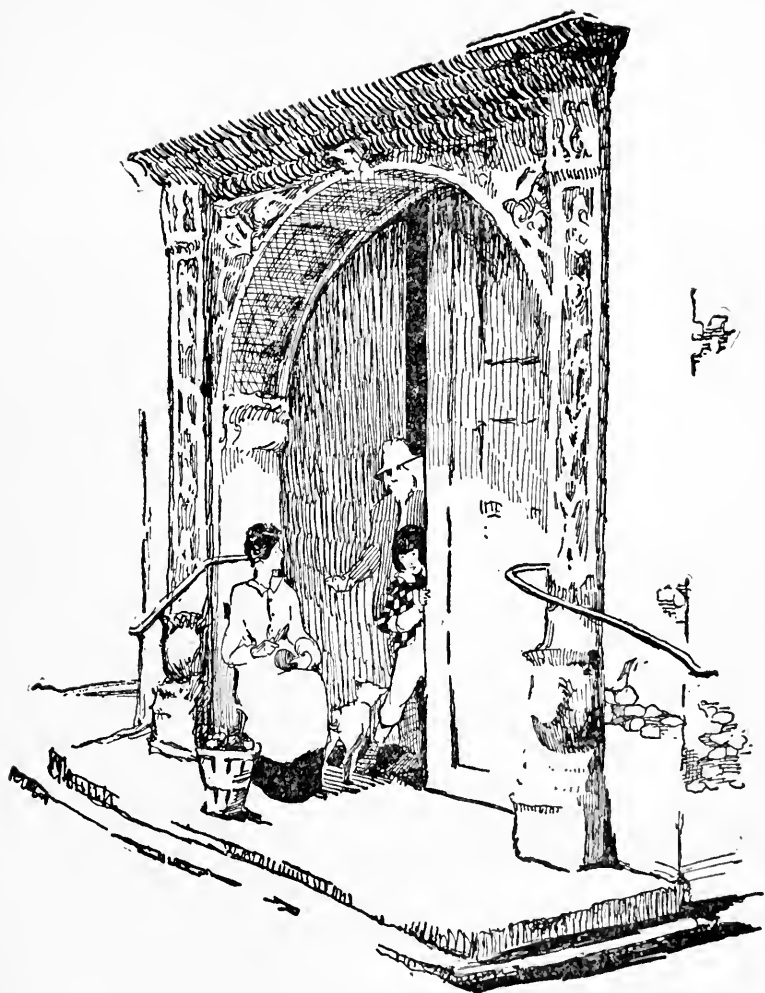
It was out—my secret.

In my eagerness to know about my mother and the mysterious door, I had told my secret.

I was so frightened I sat down on a large pile of tomatoes, and Old Timothy sat down on another with his mouth open, and we looked at each other.

Old Timothy was the first to speak.

“The Master never allows any one to go into that studio. No one has been into it for years.”



IMAGINA

Notwithstanding my secret was out, I was persistent.

"Is that a portrait of my mother?"

I looked at him and waited for my answer.

"Sure," said Old Timothy, as if something inside him made him say it though he didn't want to.

"Where does the strange carved door, without a key-hole, lead to?"

"I can't tell you about that door."

"Why?"

"Because the Master has forbidden."

"Now, Timothy," I said, determined, "I am going to those rooms every day. And if you tell Dame, I will run away with the wicked faery, and you will never see me again. Promise!"

"Sure!" said Old Timothy, distractedly.

You know, tomatoes are leaky and watery when squashed, and Old Timothy and I, in our excitement, had not noticed where we sat until we felt moisture through our trousers.

IMAGINA

We got up and looked at each other.

“Turn round!—’Taint a pretty sight,” said Old Timothy, ruefully.

Imagina had taught me to laugh. I had never laughed before I knew her, and now, as I looked at Old Timothy, and he at me, I began to laugh, and Old Timothy’s chest heaved, and then his stomach, and he chuckled.

“I’m thinking,” said he, “it would be more peaceful-like if I went first into the kitchen, backward, and then opened the front door for you.”

Dame was sitting on the porch, peeling potatoes.

“Peeling potatoes?” said Old Timothy by way of passing a word.

“They don’t look like tomatoes do they?” said Dame.

She had a way of saying things like that.

Now whether it was because Old Timothy was not accustomed to going backwards, or whether it was Dame’s remark, or both, that confused him, I

IMAGINA

do not know; anyway Old Timothy fell over the sill backwards and sat down on the floor.

"If you would enter a door the way the Lord meant you to do, instead of backing into it, you wouldn't have fallen," said Dame, without looking up.

"In that case," said Old Timothy quietly, "I might have broken my nose instead of just sitting down where the Lord meant me to sit."

By the time he finished saying this he disappeared, and I ran around to the front. So we didn't hear what Dame said, although we left her talking. She used to talk even when you couldn't hear.

After our early supper, Old Timothy winked at me and said, "I have a job in the barn if you can spare me a kettle of hot water, Dame."

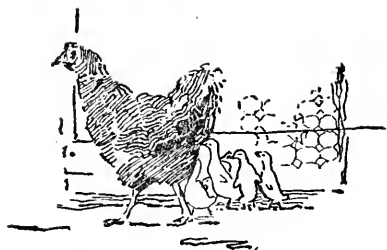
"What kind of a job?" said Dame.

"Odd job," said he, yawning. "Come with me, Rex."

IMAGINA

“Rex,” chuckled Old Timothy, when we were out of hearing, “‘odd job’ wasn’t a lie, it was a peaceful prevarication. Washing on Thursday ain’t regular.”





CHAPTER IX

THE PRINCESS

“**D**AME,” said I, one morning, “I would like some more paper and paints.”

“I gave you enough paper and paints for your geography maps, two days ago, to last a week. What do you do with them?” said she, eyeing me suspiciously while she reluctantly handed them to me.

I said, “Thank you,” as quietly as possible, instead of answering her, and I ran away to draw.

I dared not use the paper and paints out of the studio, for fear of being discovered.

The little drawings that I made were very precious to me, and I hid them in all kinds of places so Dame wouldn’t find them. Once I hid them in an old cupboard but the next morning they were gone.

IMAGINA

I was sure Dame had taken them and had destroyed them as foolish things, to punish me for wasting the paper. My little pictures of elves and faeries, dogs, trees, rocks and the sea were all gone!

They were among my first drawings and I loved them and treasured them. Although I knew Dame had taken them I dared not ask her for them, so heart-broken I went out to find Kit. He always comforted me.

I found Kit under my tree, and I threw myself on the grass near him. Kit seemed particularly frolicsome this morning, playing with his old bone shaped like a ball:—This was his only plaything.

“Kit,” said I, “if Dame found your old bone and threw it away for trash, what would you do?”

Kit immediately ceased playing and lay down beside me.

“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,” said he solemnly, and he crossed one paw over the other and looked up seriously into my unhappy face.

IMAGINA

“What’s up?” he added sympathetically.

“Dame,” I said, in a broken voice, “Dame has stolen and destroyed all my little drawings and coloured pictures. You know Kit, you watched me do them.”

“Not my favourite faery, astride the Gyascutus!” he ejaculated mournfully.

“Yes, that one, and the picture of the tree and elves dancing,—all, all.”

Overcome by the thought I rolled over and buried my face in the tall grass, while Kit licked my hand, and said:

“It’s a damn shame, and provokes one to unseemly language.”

One day when I was in the woods, I heard singing and looking up, I saw Imagina herself coming towards me smiling and dancing, with the rays of the sun lighting up her golden red hair like a golden cobweb crown.

IMAGINA

Oh, those were happy days we passed together in the woods, by the sea, finding shell-fish and wading in the pools! But best of all we loved the woods, and to lie under the trees and watch the running water.

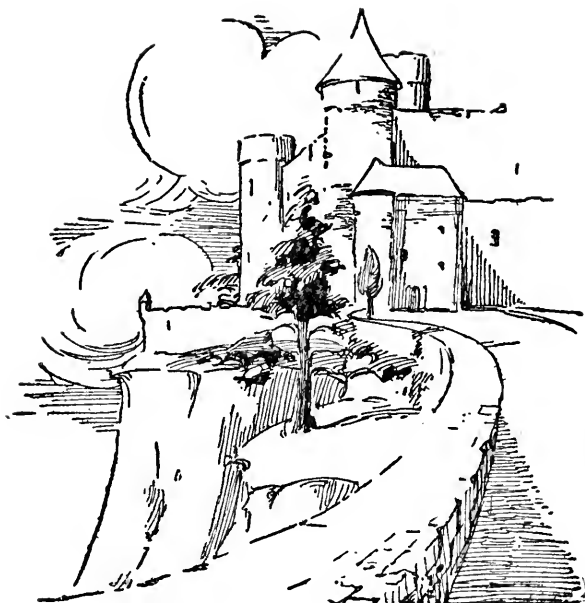
There I told her stories about the faeries, and funny stories that Old Timothy told me on winter nights—stories that I read in all those books about kings and queens, Egypt, Greece and Italy; stories about the earth, sky, and the sea: stories in the Iliad and the Odyssey about warriors, and beautiful queens and Circe: about King Arthur, Guinivere and Arthur's knights, and some of Shakespeare's people.

Sometimes we acted the different characters we read about, and wrote little plays to act.

Once, after I had finished telling her one of the stories, she said:

“My teacher taught me many things that you have told me, but they never seemed the same.





They were stupid, but when you tell them they are alive and very interesting.”

“Do faeries have teachers, Imagina?”

“Oh, yes, always! Once a teacher whipped me—slapped my hand.”

“Slapped your hand, Imagina!” I said indignantly. “What for?”

“I hesitate to reveal the cause, my lord,” and she bowed to me. “I’m afraid I trifled with the dig-

IMAGINA

nity of my elders, and elders subordinate the unconscious budding of frivolity."

Imagina laughed as if she were mocking something some one had said.

"However," she added, "later I had my revenge; I played a trick on one of the elders who slapped me."

"What kind of an elder, Imagina?"

"Female elder, with a little round nose, little round eyes and little round curls, that corked-screwed down the sides of her face."

"What trick did you play?"

"They do say, Rex, that little girls are curious, but I do say there are some boys with the same gift."

"What trick did you play, Imagina?" I asked persistently.

"Far be it from me to restrain noble curiosity. I painted flies on the lily-white pad of her desk. She tried to whisk them off with her hand; and as they still remained, she put her little round spec-

IMAGINA

tacles on her little round nose to investigate. It was then we all laughed. It was later I was punished.”

“Now read me one of the poems you wrote, Rex.”

“I will read you the one about the golden robin. I wrote it for you because you love birds.—

‘I saw him fly—a bright gay flash
Of flamy fire—with startling dash;

He dashed to a budding golden-rod,
He made its bonny banners nod,

He hopped a half-moon round, and when
The slim mast swayed, he pecked, and then—

He gave a whirl, and up, and away:
A flash of flamy fire so gay!’ ”

When I finished she said:

“I like the golden robin coming in a fiery flame.
I have a bird all yellow at home.”

“I have never seen a yellow bird. It must be beautiful.”

IMAGINA

“Yes, I keep him in a little cage.”

“You?” I interrupted, “you keep a bird in a little cage?”

“Yes, he can hop from bar to bar.”

“From bar to bar!”

“Why do you open your big eyes like that at me? You frighten me, Rex. You look so angry. Why are you angry?”

“How would you like to be kept in a cage? Oh, it is cruel to keep a bird in a cage!— A bird, that ought to be free to fly and fly into the sky! It is as unnatural as a ship moored to a rock with its white sails spread, longing to ride the waves and play and flutter its sails in the wind.”

“But my yellow bird sings, sings all day. He seems happy.”

“That is the sad part of it; he is used to it. Once when I was very little, I was ill, and Dame made me stay in my room days and days. I was very unhappy and restless at first, and then I got used

IMAGINA

to it and did not fret as I did before. If she had kept me there all these years, I might have become accustomed to it. I would not have known any difference. But how horrible it would have been to have lived all these years in one room like a prison!

"I will tell you a story I read about Leonardo. When he had money, wherever he went he bought the wild birds in cages and set them free, free to wing above into the blue and sing again in the trees; and so he restored them to liberty."

"To please you, I will not buy any more birds in cages," Imagina said, tossing her head proudly.

"I don't want you to promise just to please me, Imagina," I said gently, for I feared she might feel hurt. "I want you to see how cruel it is yourself."

She didn't answer, so I hurried on to say:

"I love all the stories about Leonardo. He was like the great Magi in the faery books."

IMAGINA

“Was he a great Magi?” Imagina asked, interested.

“Not exactly, but he had a magic touch. And he had great knowledge about everything, more than any one around him, and they didn’t understand him.

“And the book says, ‘He was a great painter but a greater man.’ So they called him a super-man. And they said Michael Angelo tried to paint the Super-man. You know those four powerful figures on the Sistine Chapel.”

“What is a super-man?”

“Oh, all great men’s qualities mixed up in one man, poetry, painting, science, writing, oh, everything all in one man.

“Once he was invited to visit the Duke of Milan. He did not go as an artist, but as a player on the harp, a strange harp of silver made by his own hands and shaped curiously like a horse’s skull.

“He invented all kinds of things, and wrote

IMAGINA

many books, besides being the greatest painter of his time. Once he found a very strange lizard, and on its back he fastened the wings and the scales of other lizards, and he made horns and a beard and fastened them on: then he tamed it. When the lizard walked, the wings trembled, and people were afraid of it and ran away. And he could tame the most fiery horses. You see how wonderful he was in everything!"

Not long after, Imagina said, "I want to go to see the library, and the room with the mysterious door. Perhaps I could open it."

"Come now, then, because it is getting late," I said, taking her little hand. For all at once, I cared for nothing but to give her her wish, and all that had troubled me about it before didn't seem to matter.

As we tramped through the woods together, I said, "I am so proud, Imagina, I have a mother. I have found her portrait."

IMAGINA

She smiled and said, "Perhaps she was a faery too."

"No," I said, "I am quite sure she wasn't."

When we came in sight of the great white house with pillars and towers, she said with astonishment:

"Do you live in that castle?"

"Yes, I live in that house, not in all of it, you know, only in one wing. The library and the studio are in another wing, and there is still another wing, and beyond that there is the great tower. No one ever goes into that, and I can't get into it. The windows are so high I can't reach the tower with a ladder. I think the mysterious carved door in the studio leads into it."

"That isn't a house," said Imagina, "that is a great castle and only Princesses live in castles."

We sat down on the grass and looked at the huge castle, so white against the dark pine-trees, so lonely looking, with a view of the sea, the great

IMAGINA

rocks and the white sand stretching into the sky.

"I think," Imagina whispered, with a tragic air, "I think your mother must have been a Princess, and she was stolen by your father who comes out of the clouds, and he built her a castle and kept her in that wing and studio, and that carved door without a key-hole leads to the tower where she was imprisoned. And she couldn't look out of the studio window because it is in the roof, and she couldn't get out of the tower because the windows are so high."

"You forget, Imagina, the fan and the bonnet and the harp are in the library; they must have been my mother's."

"Well," she whispered mysteriously, "perhaps the ugly men wouldn't let her look out on the sea; perhaps—"

And here she arose and pointed towards the castle, and her eyes grew big, and the yellow light in them shone.

IMAGINA

"What is it, Imagina?" said I, awed. "What do you see?"

"Perhaps—" said she, whispering.

"Say it," said I, rising and putting my arms around her.

"If your father imprisoned her in the tower and the mysterious carved door leads into the tower, perhaps she is there now!"

She looked at me with sparkling eyes.

"Oh, Imagina!" was all I could say.

"Perhaps," she repeated, her face getting red with excitement, "perhaps your father has imprisoned the Princess, your mother, in the tower. Have you been in all the rooms of the castle?"

"Oh, no, I haven't. I have only been in one wing where we live, and in the library and the studio."

"Who can tell?" she continued. "You may find her some day. Open the door leading to the tower and find out the secret.—Did you ever hear a noise?"

IMAGINA

I had never seen Imagina so trembling and eager.

"No," said I, "only the wind. Perhaps it wasn't the wind!—Imagina," and I was trembling, too,—
"perhaps the castle is an enchanted castle!"

"I am sure it is," Imagina answered, "and this is an enchanted island, and the Princess could not escape, so she painted and painted all the things she remembered, and all the beautiful things around her."

"Surely," I continued (for her own humour had been gradually awakening mine), "surely, though, you don't think Dame and Old Timothy are faeries!"

And I shouted at the thought.

By that time I had found I could laugh and I had a pretty hearty one, too, to make up for lost time, I suppose.

"Dame," said Imagina, with her large eyes wide, "Dame is a witch!"

"But Old Timothy?" I said, inquiringly.

IMAGINA

“Old Timothy is a woodman.”

“And I?”

“You are a star-child.”

Now here was enough to set my mind on fire:
An Enchanted Island, and I a star-child!

It was true I loved to look out of my window by night at the stars and the moon, and one star I had always thought of as mine. I had called Imagina out of the mist and she had come to me a lovely, real, and loving—though at times a wicked—faery.

“Imagina,” I said, my mind going back to my mother, “Imagina, come with me immediately and help me try to find my mother Princess!”

“No, no,” said she timidly.

“Are you afraid?”

“Yes, I am afraid of the witch, but it is fun-
afraid.”

And she wrenched her hand from mine, as she ran dancing away—her amber eyes twinkling while she sang:

IMAGINA

A witch a faery gobbled,
And so fat she grew she wobbled,
And back and forth she hobbled
 Round a great fat tree;
Till the faery forth and bobbled
And the she-witch shrank and shobbled,
 Until away blew she
 Round the great fat tree.

And she left me staring at the great white castle, so lonely against the dark pine trees. I stayed there a long time, thinking. Every day seemed to bring so many things to think about, with nobody to answer any questions except Old Timothy.

Twilight softened and dimmed into blue, and my star came out and the evening stars. The white castle grew indistinct in the early blue night.

Was this an enchanted castle? Was this an enchanted island? Was I a star-child?

Then the figure of Old Timothy appeared, going home for supper. I called to him to wait a bit.

“Timothy,” said I, as I joined him, “are you a woodman?”

IMAGINA

"Sure," said he. "If I ben't, how would you get your wood chopped?"

"Timothy," said I, so serious that he glanced at me wonderingly, "am I a star-child?"

He hesitated.

"Am I a star-child?"

"There be those as are born under a lucky star. Sure, you were born under a lucky star."

Perhaps that was why I loved that star—my star.

"Is Dame a witch?"

"Soft!" said Old Timothy, looking around carefully. "On occasions, on occasions!"

"But not all the time?" I asked.

"Sure, no!"

We had reached the kitchen door, so there was no time to ask about the Princess.

"Both late!" said Dame as we entered. "I wonder, if I gave you dog-biscuit some night, would you remember to come early the next time?"

IMAGINA

“Well, we might be able to get away with the dog-biscuit. We might, I say; but we might not be able, on all occasions, to get away from our dispositions, being easy-like, young and dreamy.”

“Young!” ejaculated Dame, giving Old Timothy a sharp glance. And Old Timothy answered her saying: “Young in spirit, I was meaning.”

I was too excited to eat very heartily. I gazed out of the window at my star and the blue night.

“What are you thinking about, Rex? What are you thinking about?”

“I am a star-child,” I said simply.

“Star what?” Dame began, but she didn’t finish.

“Hark! What’s that? Is it the Princess?” said I, before I thought.

Why Dame didn’t answer I can’t say. She always answered everything.

She just gazed at Old Timothy in terror and said:

“It’s a long time since his father has been here. I think I will write him to come.”

IMAGINA

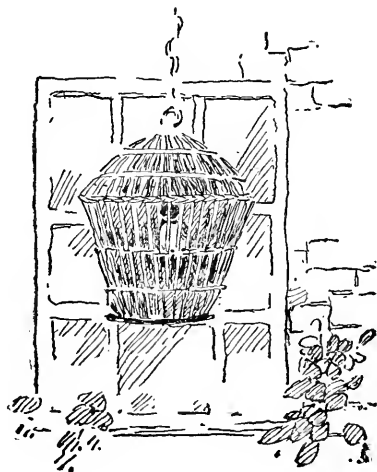
“It’s the wind making that noise,” said Old Timothy, answering my question. “The wind’s always playing tricks.”

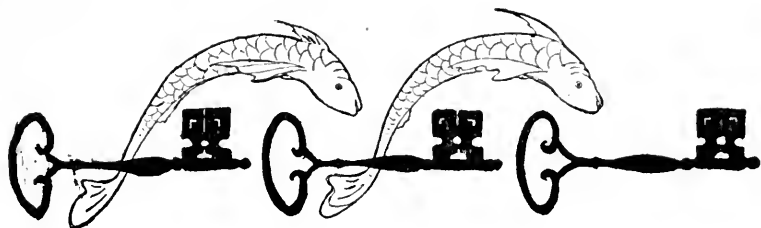
He gave Dame a queer look I didn’t understand.

“Now will you believe what I’ve been telling you?” said Dame, as I passed out of the door for bed.

“I knew a man that was called crazy once, who had more brains—”

But I heard no more. I was not interested in the man who was crazy. I dreamed of enchanted castles and faeries and Princesses.





CHAPTER X

INDEPENDENCE

THE dreaded day had come at last—the day when Imagina was to leave me, leave me for long, long years.

Oh, what would I do without my love, my faery, my dear playmate, during all those winter days, spring days and summer days? Wherever I went the memory of her bright companionship would “make the daylight still a happy thing,” but when night came I knew the shadow of loneliness would creep over me and fill me with a great longing.

I felt the beauty in the world around me, but Imagina had taught me there was joy in it, too, and she had taught me how to laugh.

IMAGINA

Her pretty ways, her naughty ways, I loved them all. Now she was going away and our time to say good-bye was short.

She came on a late November morning, wrapped all in woolly things and furs. A little fur cap was on her curly, golden red hair, and her hands were tucked in a round fur ball.

“Where are you going, Imagina?” I said in despair.

“To a warm climate, Italy, with my mother and father.”

“Is your father a faery?”

“Oh, no,” she said, “father is a great painter and paints beautiful pictures.”

“Then, Imagina, if your father isn’t a faery and he married a faery, I shall marry you when you come back.”

I did not stop to think if she would marry me.

“While you are gone I shall study. I am glad I have those books, and I shall draw and paint and



IMAGINA

be a painter like your father, and we will live here."

"But you couldn't paint portraits here. You will have to go out in the world. There are no people here. You could only paint landscapes."

Then seeing my bewildered look, she added reassuringly, "Once in a while you can come back here."

This had not occurred to me; the idea startled me: to go out in the world and meet all kinds of strange people! What would I do? What would I say to them?

"Do people frighten you when you go out into the world, Imagina?"

"Oh, never," she said, carelessly. "Why did you call me Imagina? Do you know I have another name? But why did you call me Imagina?"

"I will tell you. I was a very lonely little boy. I longed for affection, for some one to love me and so I created Imagina out of the mist, and used to

IMAGINA

talk to her from my balcony in the moonlight, and I held her in the 'folds of my heart'—then I met you."

"You must never call me by that other name. I always want to be Imagina to you."

"See," she added, taking my hand and leading me to a tree where there was a large hole, "if you will look in this hole sometimes you will find a letter, and you must write to me and tell me all that you are doing."

It seemed mysterious, but I supposed she knew a faery who would put it there.

I had made a little portfolio and placed in it some of the drawings I had made in the studio during the summer days. These I gave to her with great pride, so she might remember me when she was far away. One, a sketch of Imagina, was the best of all.

She gave me a beautiful water-colour sketch that her father had made of her. She said, "Keep this

IMAGINA

for me and look at it when you are lonely, and then smile.”

Imagina was so gentle and quiet, she hardly seemed like herself.

“Now I must go.”

And she flung her arms about my neck, and when she saw I noticed tears on her cheek, she tossed her pretty head and said, “I am a girl, you know.”

I felt just then that boys ought to have that privilege as well as girls, but I held out and didn’t cry. Then she threw me a kiss and danced away as she always did, singing:

Come join the faery ring,
Dance and sing.
The leaves on the wind
Will flutter a tune
Under the moon:
Don’t borrow sorrow
About to-morrow.

Weave your dreams in faery-land
For elves and faery-folk demand

IMAGINA

Hearts of gladness
No sadness.

Live your dream,
For your dream
Is the deed of to-morrow.
So borrow no sorrow
About to-morrow.

But she left me fighting my sorrow.

The leaves seemed to drop tears and bend down mournfully above my head. And the wind cried through the branches for her, and made a low moan.

Kit and I walked home, and I lay down under my tree, and Robin Red Love pecked my hand for crumbs, but I didn't move. I seemed to be burning up, and Kit licked my hand and said:

"Cheer up! I was born in a place where there were a lot of faery girls; let us go off and find them."

But I didn't move, though it was cold. I didn't

IMAGINA

want a lot of faery girls. I wanted just one—*just one*—my Imagina!

I lay there and felt hot and ill, and Old Timothy came by.

He looked at me and didn't say anything—he never did say anything unless he was asked a question. Although he was old, he was big and strong; so he picked me up in his strong arms and carried me into the kitchen, and Kit followed.

Dame was astonished and excited.

"Is he hurt?" she said anxiously, smoothing out her apron and her white hair under her cap.

"Perhaps something is hurt inside him, and he is a bit tired," replied Timothy.

The answer did not satisfy Dame.

"Take him right up and put him on his bed, and I will follow," said she, in a determined way.

But Old Timothy wrapped me in an afghan and laid me on the sofa in the end of the kitchen we

IMAGINA

called the comfortable end. Then he sat down by me and smoked his pipe.

“Did you hear me?” said Dame.

It was the first time I ever knew him to oppose Dame and I wondered who would win.

“I heard you,” said Old Timothy, “but for the present he is going to stay here where it is warm.”

“What is the matter with you?” said she, addressing me.

I looked at Old Timothy, as I answered and said:

“Imagina, the lovely, wicked faery, has gone away for years.”

And although I tried not to cry, tears gathered in my eyes.

Old Timothy got up and took down a clean towel and roughly wiped my face, saying, “Got a dirty face this evening.”

In that way my tears escaped Dame’s sharp eyes.

“Knew a lovely, wicked faery once myself, when I was young and handsome,” he said, chuckling.

IMAGINA

“I think,” said Dame, “you must have a fever.” And turning to Old Timothy she said, scornfully, “Pity you hadn’t learned some sense along with your handsome face in your young days.”

She said other things about wicked faeries, and what nonsense some people talked, but I was too weak to care, and the next thing I remember, I was awake in my bed, and the sun was shining, and I got up, wondering how I would be able to escape every day to the library and the room with the mysterious locked door, without being discovered.

I determined to face Dame and tell her what I would do. I dressed quietly, bracing myself to speak.

“Timothy,” said I, as he was about to leave the room after breakfast, “don’t go yet.”

And I pulled his coat; perhaps I held on to the end of it.

“Dame,” said I, quaking, but firm in my made-up mind, “I have discovered the room with my father’s

IMAGINA

books, and my mother's room with the paintings and drawings, and all winter I am going to read and study there, and I am going to draw and paint. And some day I am going to be a great painter, and if you tell my father, or if my father comes and prevents me, I will smash everything."

And as I thought of the awful possibility of being prevented, I grew red in the face like Imagina, and I said:

"I will smash the window; I will smash the china; and I'll—and I'll smash your best bonnet."

"I know he means it," said Old Timothy, "and I wouldn't prevent him, if I was you, because it would be a pity to see your beautiful bonnet destroyed entirely."

Dame stood aghast, looking at me with her mouth open, while I burst out again:

"I am going to study and paint there, and I am going to marry Imagina, the wicked faery."

"He's gone mad," said Dame.

IMAGINA

“Yes, I will go mad, if you prevent me, if you prevent me,” I said.

Then I turned to go out, and I saw my shoes lying in my way, for I always changed them in the evening for slippers. I felt the rage rising within me and I cried out, while I kicked my shoes, one into the air, one under the stove:

“Damn my shoes! Damn my shoes!”

I can’t tell why I said it, only I remembered hearing Old Timothy saying that word when he was angry in the cow-shed, and he always seemed to feel better for it.

I didn’t wait for her to reply. I walked straight to the library casement in the hall, unlocked the door from the inside and threw it open. And although I heard voices, nobody came to disturb me.





CHAPTER XI

THE STRANGE MESSENGER

EVERY now and then after Imagina's departure, the closed door without a key-hole or a knob would pique my curiosity, excite my mind, but when I pounded against it, strange noises echoed down beyond, then died away moaning. Once I tried to bore a hole in the door but it must have been lined with iron. What was it? Why was I cut off from entering through that door? Who or what was in the tower? What mystery was connected with it? Why did Dame and Old

IMAGINA

Timothy keep this from me? What did they know? Would I ever know? These thoughts filled me with deep, lonely restlessness.

During the years that followed, I dreamed often and long of Imagina. I dropped notes in the hollow of the tree, and waited impatiently for an answer from her. I studied hard, wrote poetry, drew and painted. So I lived with my work, my picture and beloved books, amid wild scenery and silence.

Working alone in that strange room, I had time to *think*: to ruminate over my studies and what I wanted to do.

Only one thing of importance happened, a short time after Imagina's departure, when I was still quite young.

We were eating noon dinner when suddenly there was a loud knocking on the front door.

The unexpected noise made us all start to our feet and look at each other. No one ever came to

IMAGINA

see us except my father and he always came to the kitchen and walked in.

"Who can it be?" cried Dame, smoothing out her apron and hurrying out.

When she returned, she had a yellow paper in her hand.

She was so excited she put on her spectacles upside down, and turned the paper round and round, until Old Timothy, looking over her shoulder, gave the paper another turn, saying: "Writing upside down is as difficult as Chinese."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Dame suddenly sitting down.

Old Timothy turned to me and said, "Your father is very ill, and he wants Dame to go to him immediately—I will harness the horse, Dame, and be ready to take you in a few minutes."

"That won't be necessary," said Dame, who was always practical. "It won't do to leave Rex alone. The boy out there is waiting for his money."

IMAGINA

Here she produced her pocket-book. "Give him this and tell him to wait and take me with him."

And in her confusion she threw her pocket-book into the scrap-basket, and carefully put the telegram in her pocket.

Old Timothy rescued the pocket-book and placed it in the pocket of her silk apron, and removed the telegram, without her noticing what he did. Then she hurried away to dress and pack her things.

"It's a bit chilly, I'm thinking," said Old Timothy, "I will ask the young chap to come warm himself by the fire."

And he disappeared and returned, bringing with him a boy a few years older than I was.

With intense curiosity I watched this boy. Was he the kind of boy that was out in the world?

He was sturdy and quite stout, with red curly hair, and merry, alert blue eyes, and a face red from the long drive.

"Better have a cup of coffee and a bite of dinner

IMAGINA

and sit by the fire and warm yourself," said Old Timothy, kindly.

"Think I will," the boy answered, looking cheerful at the thought.

He didn't seem to see me as I stood by the window, while he sat by the fire and warmed himself.

"This is a rummy place to find. Started at dawn, thought I never would find it, struck an old hole of a town, post-office and a few houses, drove through a deep, dark wood; you couldn't see the sky, the rocks rose up so straight from the ground: trees twisted like serpents, twining out of the black cracks; damp, dark pools as dark as night; shadows in forms of the devil. Must have been a bit of Hell, that didn't get drawn below. Golly! had to whistle to keep up my courage; my hair stood up like fringe; don't believe it's down yet."

And he smoothed his unruly red locks.

"Then suddenly, I struck this great castle in the

IMAGINA

wilderness. I thought I was wuzzy. Am I awake or asleep?"

He turned his head, still warming his hands, and looked at Old Timothy.

"Dreaming," answered Old Timothy.

"Haven't got a Cinderella hid here, have ye? Or a stolen Princess, or a lunatic?"

"You're asleep, and you think you're awake," said Old Timothy, smiling.

"Chuck it," said the boy, as he proceeded to devour the food put before him.

"Hello!" said the boy, catching sight of me standing by the window, "When did you blow in? Perhaps you are a Prince in disguise."

"I am a star-child," said I, frankly, hoping to set him right and let him know I was not a prince.

"Is this an enchanted palace?" said he, addressing me.

"It is," said I, quite simply.

"See here," said he to Old Timothy, "tell the old

IMAGINA

witch-bird to wizzle up, or I'll get light of head and swift of feet. It will be the middle of the night before we reach the boat now. Wouldn't mind if it was the coy Princess or Cinderella going back with me in the moonlight, but the old dame might turn me into a pumpkin."

"Or bumpkin," said Old Timothy.

"Whistle," said the boy quickly.

Then they both smiled.

Strange how they both seemed to understand each other so quickly!

I wanted to talk to him, but I didn't like to venture a remark. There was that strange, incomprehensible twinkle in his eye like that in Imagina's, and I felt an instinctive feeling that the poems which meant so much to me would not mean much to him. Perhaps this was the kind of boy that Imagina said upset the glue pot on his friend's head.

Just then it comforted me to remember that

IMAGINA

Imagina had said she loved me better than she did any boy out there in that, to me, unknown world.

We heard Dame's silk skirts rustling down stairs.

"Tra la, Star-child!" said the boy.

"Tra la, Sleeper-walker!" said I, soberly.

Now what prompted me to say that I don't know. Perhaps it was Old Timothy's remark about his being asleep and awake. Then I wanted to say something that was like what he said.

The boy stopped, turned and gave me a quizzical look, and passed out saying:

"Wuz! think I've really got 'em."

Here Kit appeared, and the boy patted him, and Kit licked his hand.

"Kit," said I, "what do you think of him? You seem friendly."

"He's a jolly all-right kind, when you understand him," said Kit indifferently, as if he met boys like that every day.

IMAGINA

Dame opened the door and entered—her silk dress standing stiff, her clean lace collar lying low on her neck, and a big white carved brooch holding it together. Her face was red with excitement and hurry; her beautiful bonnet with purple flowers was tied under her chin, and her thin hands trembled in their mitts, as she picked up all the things on the table without looking, and put them into her hand-bag: her knitting, her handkerchief, pencil, sewing and darning things, and then Old Timothy's pipe.

"Timothy," said she solemnly, "see that Rex goes to bed at eight, and don't bake the potatoes longer than an hour."

Thus she gave orders all the way to the carriage, and we watched her and the boy drive away in the chaise. Then we went back to the house.

Old Timothy seemed restless and kept looking all around the room. At last he turned to me, and said, questioning, "My pipe?"

IMAGINA

“Oh,” said I, suddenly realising where it was.
“Dame took it.”

“Dame!” said he astonished. “Since when has she taken to the vile weed?”

“She put it in her hand-bag,” I explained.

“’Tain’t a lady’s delicate perfume,” said he, chuckling. “And it’s just as well for the sweetness of my character that I have another one here.”

After getting his other pipe from an old cupboard, he turned to me, without a smile on his face, and said:

“Rex, if your father dies, you will be a very rich boy. This house and hundreds of woodland acres as well as a great deal of money will be yours. And besides, from the other side—” he hesitated, then added quickly, “you will inherit other things of great value from a foreign land. No,” he said, as he saw I was about to speak and divined my question, “No, do not ask me any more questions. I am forbidden by the Master.”

IMAGINA

I stopped the question on my lips and asked :

“Is my father going to die?”

“The span of a man’s life,” said he, “judging by my manly and robust health, is about eighty years: your father is sixty.”

Timothy’s natural powers of evasion were great.

He went out to his work and I went to the library, where I studied awhile. Then I went to the studio and drew until it was dark.

Old Timothy and I had a pleasant meal together and we broke all Dame’s rules. Kit joined us and Old Timothy made sport of his “unexpected failures” in the way of cooking.

“Timothy,” I said, “I would like to go down to the sea, and the great rocks, and the sandy shore and stand there, and look up at the moon and the great stars, and see the moonlit water and the deep, black shadows. Dame never let me go out at night, you know, and I have only seen the moon and the

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stars from my balcony. I think it would be very exciting to stay up all night; may I?"

"Sure. Until the break of day. You can do anything you want to do to-night."

Timothy let me satisfy all my longings, but I can't remember just how late I sat up, because I must have gone to sleep leaning against Old Timothy, who was telling me a story, a faery story. I woke up the next morning with my shoes and coat off, but with my trousers on and a blanket over me. I was on the bed, but not in it, and later Old Timothy said, "I suppose that's a man's, not a woman's way, of putting sleepy chaps to bed."

"Timothy," I said, "I really think I must have sat up until the break of day."

"Oh, sure," said he, and he winked at the clock. I wondered why he winked.

"The moonlight, the rocks and the sea were very beautiful, only I was disappointed not to see the mermaids. Kit doesn't believe in mermaids. He

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wouldn't believe in faeries, if he hadn't seen one. He only believes in what he sees."

"Kit," said Old Timothy, by way of comforting me, "Kit has four legs on earth, and some of us are grovelling around on earth yet. It aren't a bit easy-like to see the moon and the stars on all fours; it's easier-like to see the shadows. You be a bit of a poet, you know, and when I was young and handsome, I wrote a line or two myself."

"Tell me about the faery you loved, Timothy; was she beautiful? Was she a wicked faery, or a good faery?"

"She was a good faery, a pretty, young faery. I will tell you about her to-night. Moonlight and faeries, when you are young, make pleasant memories, I'm thinking."

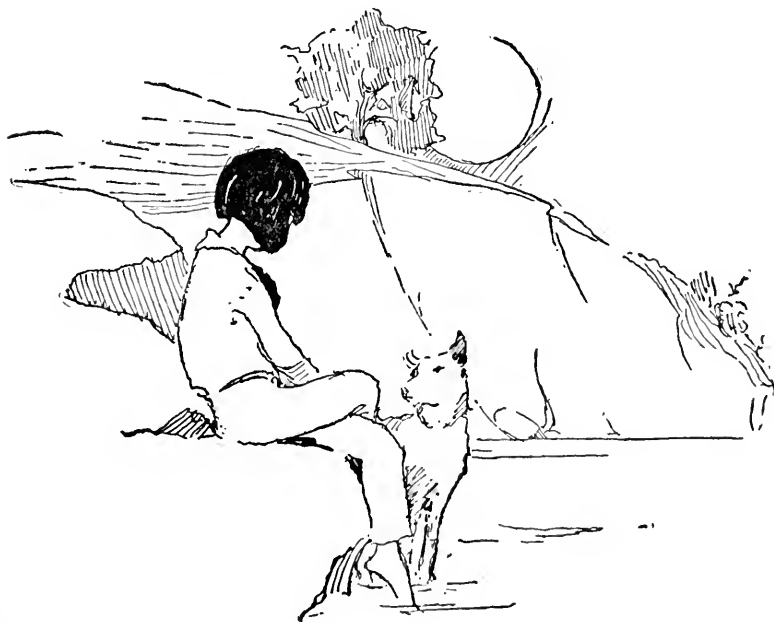
A week passed, yet Dame did not return. It was not an easy thing to send a letter to us.

One day, to our amazement, she came walking in out of breath.

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Afterwards she explained that an old man had brought her. The red-haired boy had positively refused to come. She had paid the old man well to bring her to within a mile of the house, where she dismissed him and trudged home alone.

She was thinner and very sad. She sat down out of breath, and we waited for her to speak. But she, who had always talked so much to us and even

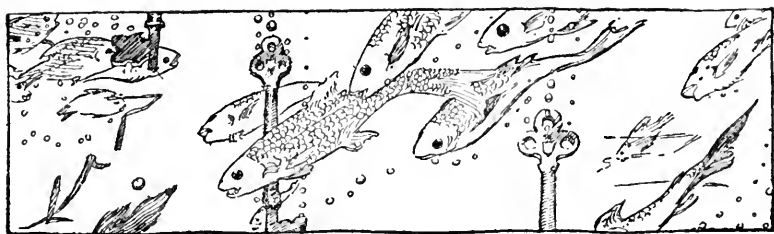


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to herself, remained silent. Neither did we speak. After a while she went up to her room overhead and we heard her sobbing—the first time I ever heard her cry.

When she had gone, Old Timothy turned to me and said:

“Rex, you are the master now.”



CHAPTER XII

LIVE YOUR DREAM

YEARS went by. The seasons came and went: Spring—when Imagina was most vivid in my dreams; and as I dreamed, she always came towards me, smiling that wistful, beautiful smile: Summer—when I lay under the trees, and thought and dreamed more than I worked: Autumn—when the crisp, cool air made me leave my outdoor painting and return to the studio, where the great logs sang cheerfully: Winter—days when I climbed the wind-blown cliffs, days when snow lay so deep, I had to stay indoors.

Suddenly something called within me. I was

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awakened by a power greater than anything I had ever dreamed of. And I knew that I would be a painter.

Many a time I had felt the loneliness of looking from my window, but now as I looked, there was no loneliness. So the seasons passed and I was happy,—happy because my work had a new meaning, and my thoughts flew to my work as to their goal, and on to further wonders.

Often I thought of the song I had taught Imagina, the one she had sung as she left me:

Weave your dreams in faery-land,
For elves and faery-folk demand
Hearts of gladness,
No sadness.
Don't borrow sorrow,
About to-morrow.

Live your dream,
For your dream
Is the deed of to-morrow.

I began to work out my dream. I had been draw-

IMAGINA

ing and painting before. But now I knew why. "Oh, it is glorious to dream and know why!" I knew I *must* be a painter. Some day I would go into the world and learn what it could give me; but I would not go with empty hands; I would bring gifts from my island.

So I lived on with my work, drawing and painting, studying the works of the great masters before me, the power and beauty of Michael Angelo's figures on the Sistine Chapel, the delicate, tender grace of Botticelli's women, the glory of Titian's colour, the subtle mystic charm of Leonardo.

And what moved me most was the thought that these great men, especially Leonardo and Botticelli had sought their inspiration in what to them were the works of the modern world, in the living women of Florence, in the poets of their day, and even when they painted religious paintings, they expressed their own personalities. Thus the desire grew ever stronger within me to express my own

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soul in the meaning of my time, and not to copy the souls of my masters.

Then as I opened my books, they, too, had a deeper meaning.

One writer I loved above all others.

Just as Vasari had interested me in the outer world when I was a boy, by the stories I used to tell Imagina, now this man by his writings had turned my thoughts to the inner beauty of things.

Beside the days when I felt great exhilaration in my work, there came days when I felt deeply discouraged and depressed. One morning I left my work and climbed the great rocks that walled the land, and watched where "the blue mystery sweeps the surface of the sea," the faint outline of ships that dared not venture near the rocky coast. And I seemed to leave the rocks and go out with the ships toward unknown lands. Then I followed the brook into the deep woods, but my mind did not follow the stream.

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What was the matter? How could I be sad or tormented? The world was the same as when first I knew my great joy. Could doubt come, after the "*Power* had touched me?" I could find no pleasure by the sea or in the woods. I returned to the castle and took out my drawings and paintings—the work that had been my pride. I laid one aside, a picture of Imagina as my fancy had drawn her: the others I gathered together under my arm and went towards the sea.

I climbed a high cliff where the rocks dropped sheer on the water side. I cast my treasures down. Then as I watched them carried out with the tide, and disappear in the mist covering the great sea, such a terror of loneliness seized me that I rushed from the cliff, fearing I might cast myself down after them.

I found myself running back to the castle. I did not stop in my room or in the library. I hurried to the room that held my mother's picture.

IMAGINA

Her eyes, so like my own, seemed to meet mine in a new way. As I looked at my mother, I understood the look in her eyes, and I said:

“I know, too, mother dear, the agony, and I know the joy.”

So my moments of doubt passed. Doubt, but not loss of faith, had been my mistake.

As I returned to my work with renewed enthusiasm and love, I envied the master, who painted that wonderful portrait of my mother, the joy of her living gracious companionship and the thoughtful things I knew she must have said to him. Had she been to him an inspiration, I wondered, as Mona Lisa had been to Leonardo, or Simonetta to Botticelli?

So the seasons passed by, and I worked on.

There were so many things to paint, so many memories to record—the grey mist creeping toward the great rocks, the purple hills rolling beyond the sea, the silent blue night with its stars and giant

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cypress trees, the deep pools and the motion of great water, the "curve of the bare-banked brooks," bits of colour and line that I had seen on listless days when they had no meaning, and a great live oak, that reminded me of one of my poems:

"Solitary in a wide flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without
a friend, a lover near."

Like the poet, I knew very well *I* could not, without my love near.

And then I painted Imagina, and as I painted her, she grew taller and older, like myself. At last she was almost grown up, and I seemed to know the grown up Imagina quite as well as my faery playmate, with her love of fun, her fascinating, unexpected ways. Now in my thoughts, she was tall and slim, and so light of step that "her foot touched the ground like a leaf falling." Her skirts were always blowing back from her ankles. And loveliest of all—lingering ever on my image

IMAGINA

of her—was her smile, so like the tender, wistful smile of Leonardo's Madonna in the Saint Anna Cartoon, which I copied many times, just as Leonardo, when a little boy, copied the smile in the designs of his master Verrocchio, which later led him to create that wonderful smile which has fascinated the world.

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Every now and then, I found something of my mother's:—a poem between the leaves of a book, signed by a strange name,—a beautiful silk gown crumpled in an old chest.

Once when I put my hand in the back part of my mother's desk, I felt a knob. I pulled it towards me, and in doing so, drew out a drawer, and in the drawer was a round flat velvet case. It was locked.

I remembered seeing a gold key on the end of a jeweled chain hanging from my mother's neck in the portrait. I took the case with me to verify

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my impression,—yes, there was the little quaint wrought gold key.

I took my knife and gently probed the case open. Inside was a carved ivory case. I carefully opened its clasp and on one side was a miniature, exquisitely painted, of a young girl, with smiling lips and large blue-grey dreaming eyes.

My mother!

There was no doubt about it. It was too like me and like the portrait. Only the smile in the portrait was sad and quiet, and the smile in the miniature was wistful and sweet.

A Russian cap trimmed with fur with an old-rose velvet crown was tilted on one side of her head, showing a mass of wavy dark brown hair. She wore an old-rose velvet coat, and fur that matched her hat bound her neck and came down on one side.

But what puzzled me was the face of the young man on the opposite side — strong, forceful, but kindly. Large features, heavy light brown hair.

IMAGINA

No,—not my father! Not the young, stern, forbidding face of my father in the portrait in the library. Then his hair was black, but I only remembered it as grey.

The deep set eyes before me?

The eyes?

When had I seen that expression of the eyes?
When I was a little child?

They were living before me.

Imagina's!

I closed the case tenderly and put it back in the secret drawer.

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Spring had risen—"risen with a laugh, and a wild rose in her mouth."

The first half of the winter had dragged long and heavy, but after that it seemed only a breath until spring. And such a spring! Never had the skies seemed so wonderful, the sea so mysterious, the air so sweet—a "breath of blowing violets," my

IMAGINA

beloved wind so full of messages, that “sang to me, from printless books, of tree-top boughs.”

With the warmer sun came a promise that Imagina would return; but when?

“Love is a thing full of anxious fears,” and the uncertainty of what Imagina’s feelings would really be for me when she came, made me restless and disturbed. Would she love me as she loved me when a child, or would her feelings have the same intensity as mine for her?

Each spring I had hoped she would return. This year she was coming, coming—but when? Oh, the impatience of love, the longing and the agony of waiting!

One bright morning I went to the woods earlier than usual. Somehow, before I put my hand in the tree, I felt that the letter was there. Yes, it was! I tore it open in haste.

I could hardly contain myself for joy.

Imagina was coming—coming to-morrow.

IMAGINA

The letter was long, and full of happiness at coming again. So all my fears were laid at rest. She loved me and she was coming to take me away with her. Where? It didn't matter; I would be with Imagina.

As I hurried back to the studio, I met Old Timothy.

Old Timothy, whose intuitions divined everything, said:

"What is it, Rex?"

"Imagina is coming back to-morrow."

"Sure, I'm glad. Perhaps you'll—"

But he did not finish.

"Imagina is coming to-morrow," I repeated, "and I am going away with her. Her father is a painter, you know. I am going away to be a painter, too.—Poor Dame will be broken-hearted. My father and she planned other work for me than to be a 'fool poet' and a despised painter." I smiled to myself. "Fortunately you stood by me,

IMAGINA

Timothy, all these years; while Dame opposed me, and upheld my father's wishes."

"You've grown tall and strong like your father," said Timothy. "Imagina will be glad of that."

Then he added in an undertone, as if he was talking to himself:

"But you have your mother's eyes, and her spirit, and you love all the things she loved."

It was the first time he had ever spoken of my mother.

Perhaps he was conscious of this, for he walked quickly away without further words.

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I was so thrilled—thrilled with joy at the thought of Imagina's coming on the morrow—that I could not sleep.

I jumped out of bed, and found my way to the studio. Shimmering through the great window in the roof, the moonlight fell directly on the mysterious door, illuminating the carved crest on the

IMAGINA

panel: an ancient shield surmounted by a crown.

Something drew me toward this door. For the first time, I noticed a button in the centre of the crown, made to represent a jewel.

I placed my finger on the jewel; it seemed to sink in. Startled, I withdrew my hand. Quickly then I pressed the button again deeper into the crown. The door slid silently into the panel, and a long, dark passage-way opened before me. I groped my way down this passage to a hall, into which opened three circular doors, leading to the great tower. The hall was lighted by a stained glass window, and the moon's rays threw a weird light on the great doors. By this light, I could see three large brass keys, one in each of the doors.

I chose the centre door; I turned the key and unlocked it. Then softly I turned the knob and pushed the door open, on a crack.

The door creaked; the noise startled me. I hastily drew the door to. But why?

IMAGINA

I had only to open it and my father's secret would be mine. My father! The last time he patted my head he said to Dame: "He is little but he is a man."

My father had guarded his secret sacredly, and now I was about to become a curious little prier, boring into his heart. For the first time my father seemed a human being. He had loved and suffered: loved my mother as I loved Imagina. There was evidence of that everywhere I looked. And my Princess mother—perhaps it was her wish, too, to keep the sacred mystery veiled.

I leaned my forehead against the door, for a moment too thrilled to move. I felt that the soul of my father, the soul of my mother, and my own soul had met in a flash.

I drew the door violently to; I turned the key and took it out; I hurried to the other doors and locked them. My heart was throbbing, my mind on fire. I ran—ran, I hardly knew where.

IMAGINA

I did not stop until I found myself at the side of a deep pool, so deep, they say, that it has no bottom. I flung the three keys into the pool. Three large bubbles floated to the top and vanished; the ripples spread in magic circles to the edge; then the pool lay dark and silent.

It was done.

I could not return to the castle. I followed the stream to the great tree in the woods, near the path where I would wait for Imagina.

I flung myself down—Kit beside me.

The dawn already was beginning to spread her white veil through the woods. Then the sun rose, bringing a glorious day for the coming of Imagina.

As I thought of my love:

“The little brook took up my tune
And to his soft green banks did croon,
The green grass rippled to the tree
And every leaf shook melody
Of love, only love!”

IMAGINA

I watched the narrow path where her small feet had so often flown. Far down it, was a shaking of white blossoms. Every rustle of the boughs, every flutter made by the birds winging their way through the stillness, building their nests in the breast of Spring, singing their mating songs to their beloved, made my heart leap and stirred thoughts of my Imagina.

She would come, my beloved, through the fluttering flags of green; "where first the pussy-willow shows her fairy muffs of grey"; a quiet little maid carrying the dancing sunbeams in her hair. I imagined it tucked up in a little golden red ball, not flying through the air as of old "by the winds unreined." Lithe, slim and graceful—my Botticelli maid!—she would come forward with both hands outstretched. So my vision brought her.

"Kit," said I, as we lay on the grass near the brook, "this is a beautiful day to welcome Imagina."

IMAGINA

Kit looked up and smiled, saying:

"You and I waiting in the rain under an umbrella wouldn't have been so romantic, and I love romance."

"Well, I'm glad it's so beautiful, Kit," I said happily. "Your ears are keener than mine. Just think, you will hear her coming first."

"That's another advantage we have, you know. But there is compensation in all things and she will probably kiss you first."

"Hush! Listen, Kit!"

Kit sat up, but before I could speak he was off through the woods.

I felt my heart beating in my throat.

Oh, the joy of it, the great joy of it!

I dashed through the winding path. There, through fluttering flags of green—the dancing sunbeams in her hair, tucked up in a golden red ball—Imagina! My beloved had come at last—My Imagina!



